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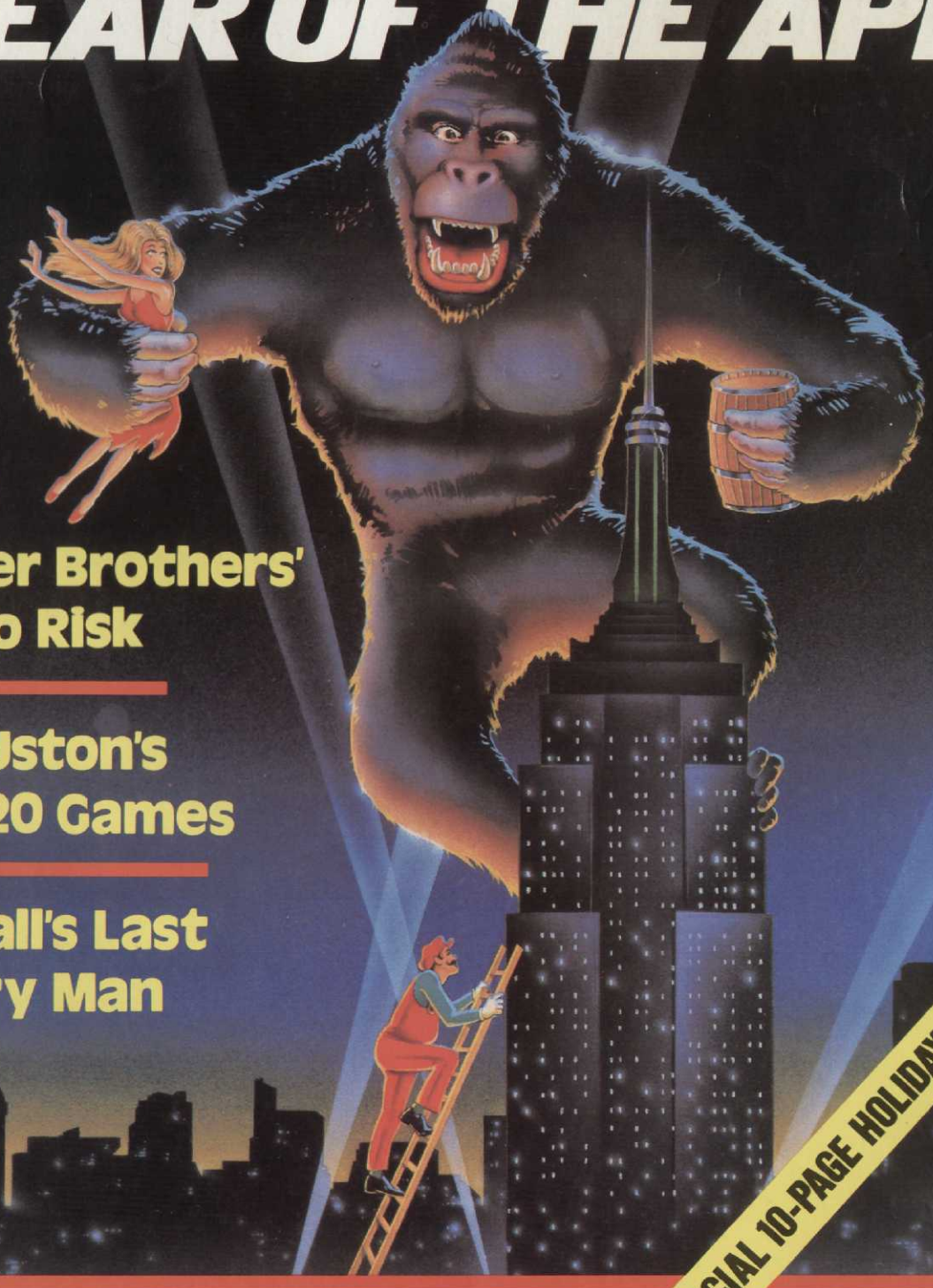

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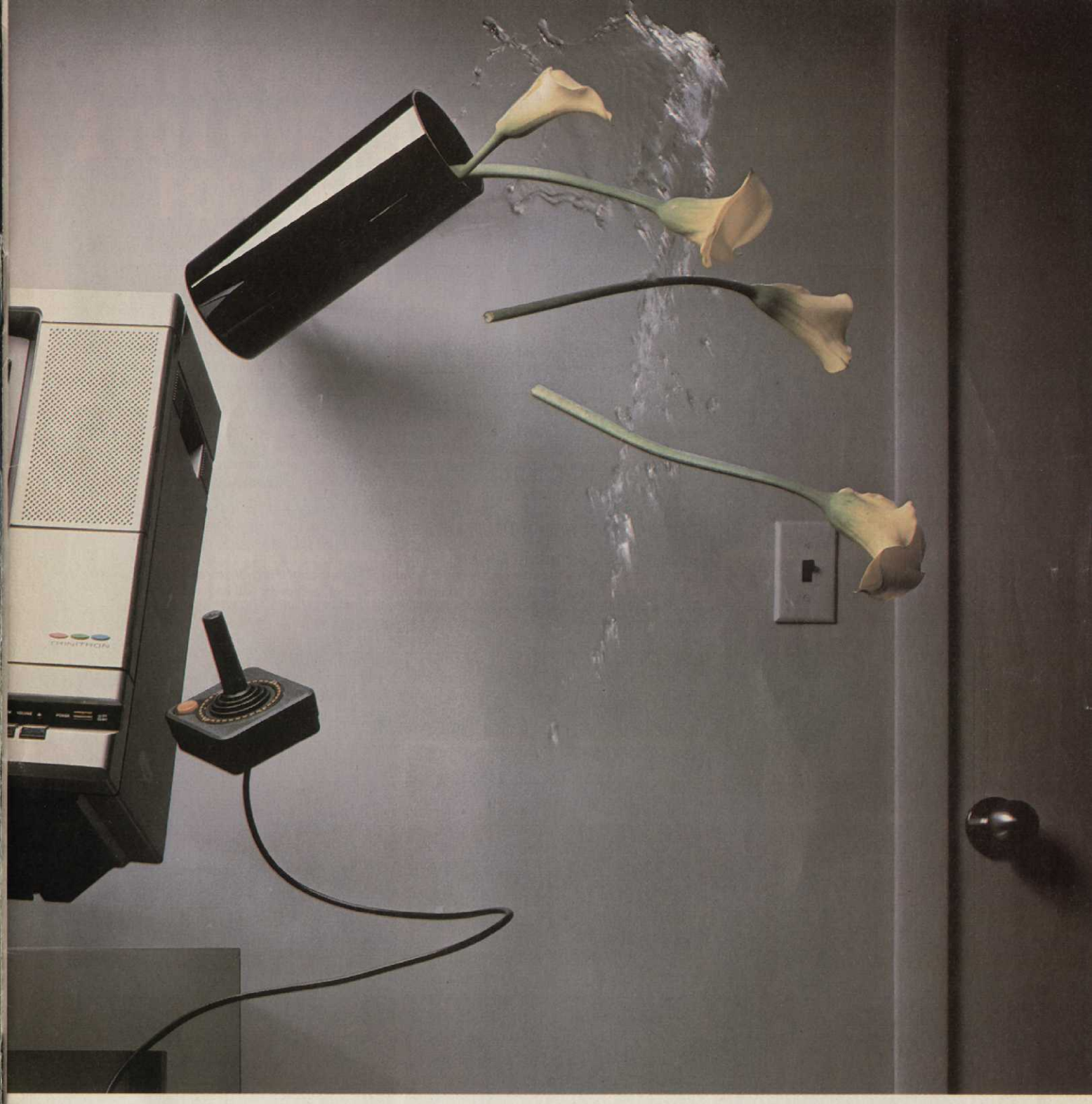

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Cover Illustration by Bob Radigan

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HYPERSPACE

Themes are fun. You may recall the first three issues of *VIDEO GAMES* had themes: Pac-Man, Video Graphics and Corporate Wars. Not to be left out of the fun, we came up with a theme for Number Four: Apes.

Need I explain what all this monkey business is about? Well, just for your information, Donkey Kong turned out to be the hit video game of the year, both in the arcades and on the TV-game circuit. From January to June, no other coin-op out-earned Donkey Kong. I can remember the words of the skeptics after Nintendo introduced it over a year ago at a Chicago trade gathering: Donkey Kong'll never make it. Why? Because Nintendo insisted on manufacturing the game itself. Is that a crime? Well, there were a lot of people who thought so. "They'll never be able to produce enough games," the skeptics scowled. Hmmmm. How's 75,000 sound to you?

To no one's surprise, Donkey Kong Jr. has appeared and already seems to be a success. So are the various Donkey Kong cartridges Coleco has designed for a number of TV-game systems, including its own (see Mike Blanchet's review in Hard Sell). According to *Billboard*'s "Top 15 Video Games" chart, Donkey Kong (for the VCS) is the best-selling cart in the country. My guess is that it will remain on top right through Christmas.

There is, however, another story that I *am* dying to tell: Back in the dawn of punk rock (1976), there was a magazine called *Punk* that dared to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the burgeoning new wave scene. The editor of this heretical journal was none other than our resident Donkey Kong fan-addict, John Holmstrom. He illustrated most of the magazine and penned such pearls as this intro to an LP review: "...no one would touch Donna Summer here so I refused to play it at first y'know 'cause it's DISCO S*** and I REALLY HATE DISCO as bad as I hate the Grateful Dead so instead I spent an hour in the bathroom with her press kit and I had nothin' to do so I played the record." Inimitable!

Then there was this crazy, wacked-out lunatic of a writer who week after week poured his guts out onto the pages of New York's *Village Voice*. His name is Mark Jacobson. "Jake," as he is affectionately known to the East Village crowd, took a special interest in "Legs" McNeil, *Punk*'s "resident punk" and Holmstrom's lifelong chum. When Jake wrote "Teenage Hipster in the Modern World," he had this to say about Holmstrom:

"...a genius cartoonist and Harvey Kurtzman disciple, (he) made *Punk* the best magazine of neo-literate times—he made the whole thing look like a comic book; that way he could print the theory of relativity and kids would read it."

Recently, after Jake agreed to explore Donkey Kong's significance in these pages, the first thing he did was phone Holmstrom for advice. "John," Jake explained later, "is exactly the kind of person who *would* like Donkey Kong. It's his kind of game." Says Holmstrom: "Yeah, I love Donkey Kong. But Space Panic, now *that* was a game!"

Final Notes: This is the first of many monthly issues of *VIDEO GAMES* to come. Congratulations to us! And join me in welcoming Sue Adamo, the former managing editor at *Starlog*, to our staff. Enjoy!

SB

VIDEO GAMES

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Double Speak

No Respect

With all due respect to Eugene Jarvis' status, I must argue with his negative review of Dig-Dug (Coin-op Shop, Oct. issue). He claimed Dig-Dug resembled Pac-Man. I don't see any family resemblance at all. He said that you die running into the enemy. So what? In my arcade, in 17 out of 20 games it is possible to die that way. Hey, how about putting an issue out every month!?!

Pat Tierney
Louisville, Ky.

Yes, master. VIDEO GAMES *is going monthly—beginning with this issue!—Ed.*

Eye for an Eye

A letter in your December issue, headlined "Optic Nerve," disparaged optometrists. The letter said that "an optometrist is not an eye doctor" and added that advice to consult an optometrist for visual problems is "poor." Optometrists are health professionals, trained and licensed to treat problems of vision. They may also detect eye pathology which can then be treated medically or surgically by an opthomologist. We are certain that your fine magazine will want to set the record straight.

Walter S. Censor
Executive Director
The Optometric Council of
New York State

Pro Quo Pins

Why not also cover pinball, too? I admit that many of the newer machines are just rehashes of old ideas, but some are unique and deserve a review in your magazine— like Bally's Mr. & Mrs. Pac-Man and Gottlieb's Caveman and Haunted House. It appears that Gottlieb is finally turning out great pinball machines again.

Larry Melton
Urbana, Ill.

We do, we do! See Eugene Jarvis' reviews of Caveman and Mr. & Mrs. Pac in the Dec. issue. And for another point of view I invite you to turn to page 72.—Ed.

What's a Canuck?

I am thinking about purchasing a ColecoVision, but every demo I've seen doesn't have the roller controller. Why is this? I'd very much appreciate you answering this question, although I'd be very surprised if you did because no Canadian has been in any column about video games.

Rod Nelmei
Vancouver, B.C.

If you read our Dec. issue you'd know that that last statement is untrue. And I'm sure our competition has nothing but the highest respect for Canadians. Like, you know what I mean, eh? Regarding the "speed roller," you'll find an answer to your question in the Hard Sell column. Go Canucks!—Ed.

Write On

"Programming for Dollars," by Dale Archibald (Dec. issue) was the high point of your magazine. Since I am just now learning, or shall I say trying to learn, graphics programming I was thoroughly intrigued with the article. With a lot of work and luck I hope to write an acceptable video game program. In the article, Mr. Archibald mentioned three software firms interested in new programs; namely Strategic Simulations Inc., Broderbund Software and APX/Atari Inc. There were no addresses mentioned however. I would greatly appreciate it if you can supply them along with any other info on the subject of graphics programming. Thanks.

Nick Vigorito Jr.
Brooklyn, N.Y.

You're welcome. The addresses are Strategic Simulations Inc., 465 Fairchild Drive, Suite 108, Mountain View, CA. 94043; Broderbund, 1928 Fourth St., San Rafael, Ca. 94901; APX/Atari Inc. P.O. Box 427, 155 Moffett Pk. Drive, Sunnyvale, Ca. 94086. The rest is up to you.—Ed.

Donkey Business

Why not do an in-depth study on Donkey Kong like you did on Pac-Man (Aug. issue)? In my area, it's the hit game.

Randy Gooding
Tucker, Ga.

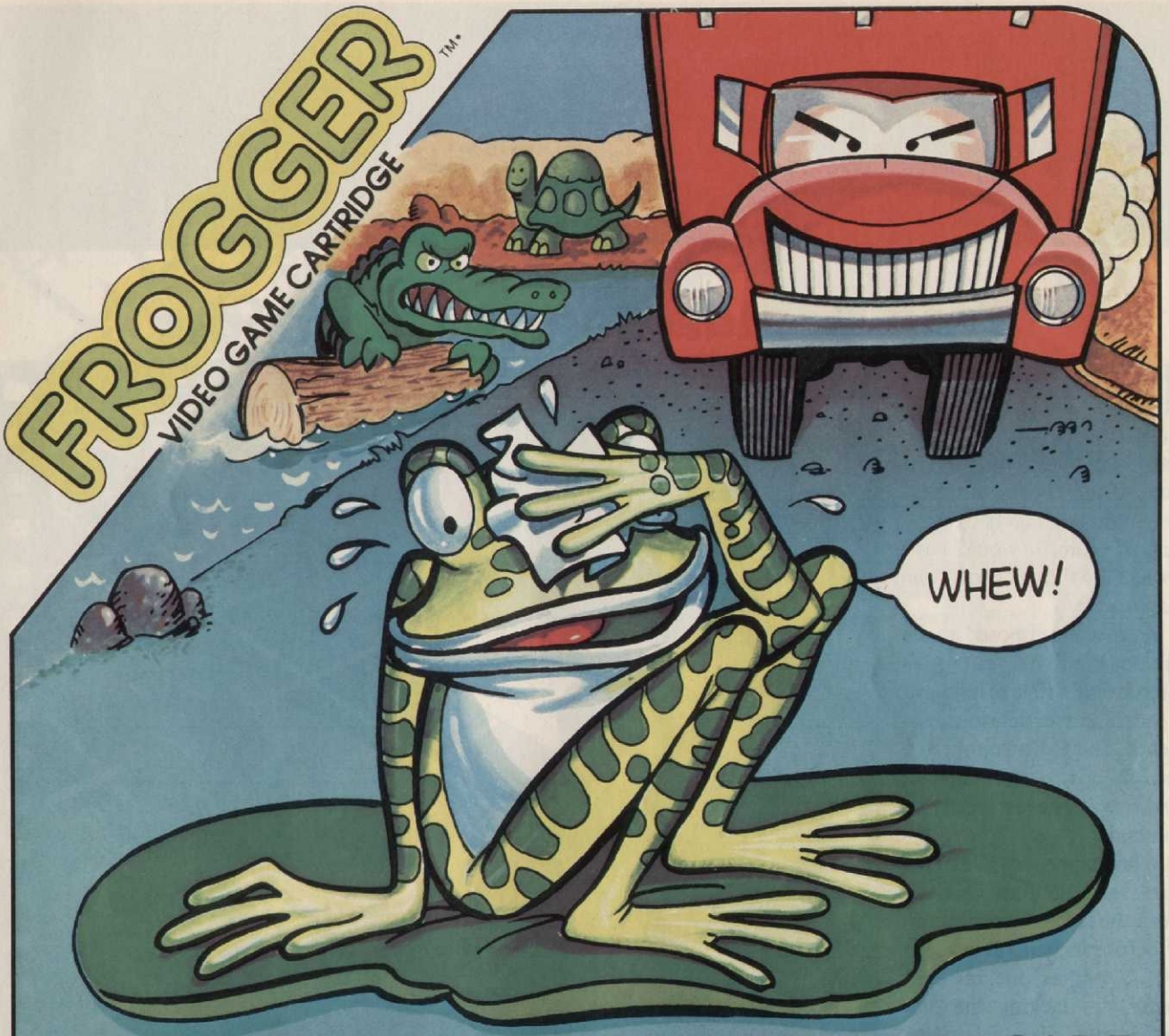
We must be psychic. Mark Jacobson has a few things to say about your favorite pastime, beginning on page 30. And John Holmstrom is going Donkey Kong Jr. crazy in Coin-Op Shop (page 69). Good enough?—Ed.

Your Wish is Our Wish

Could you possibly give me more information about ColecoVision, especially how it compares with other systems and how good it is overall?

Billy Randall
Syracuse, N.Y.

You got it. See Mike Blanchet's review of ColecoVision in Hard Sell, starting on page 72—Ed. ▲



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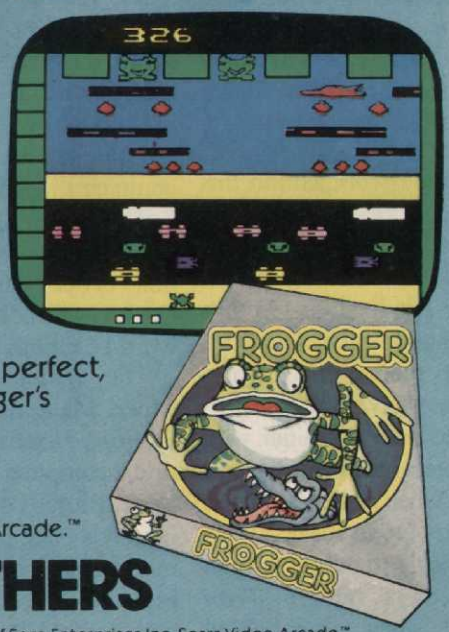
Frogger has just jumped out of the arcades and into your home. Sights, sounds, and all. Do you have the skill to get him to his home?

Frogger's first challenge is to cross a highway where reckless hot rods hurtle by, and huge trucks go thundering in his path. Every safe jump in this maze of motor and metal is a crucial step home.

Beyond is the raging river where the safety of a slippery log or diving turtle is all Frogger can count on to stay afloat.

Frogger's last leap to his lily pad home must be perfect, or it's back to the road to try again. Good luck. Frogger's counting on you.



For your Atari Video Computer System™ and the Sears Video Arcade.™

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BLIPS

Tron Coulda Been a Contender

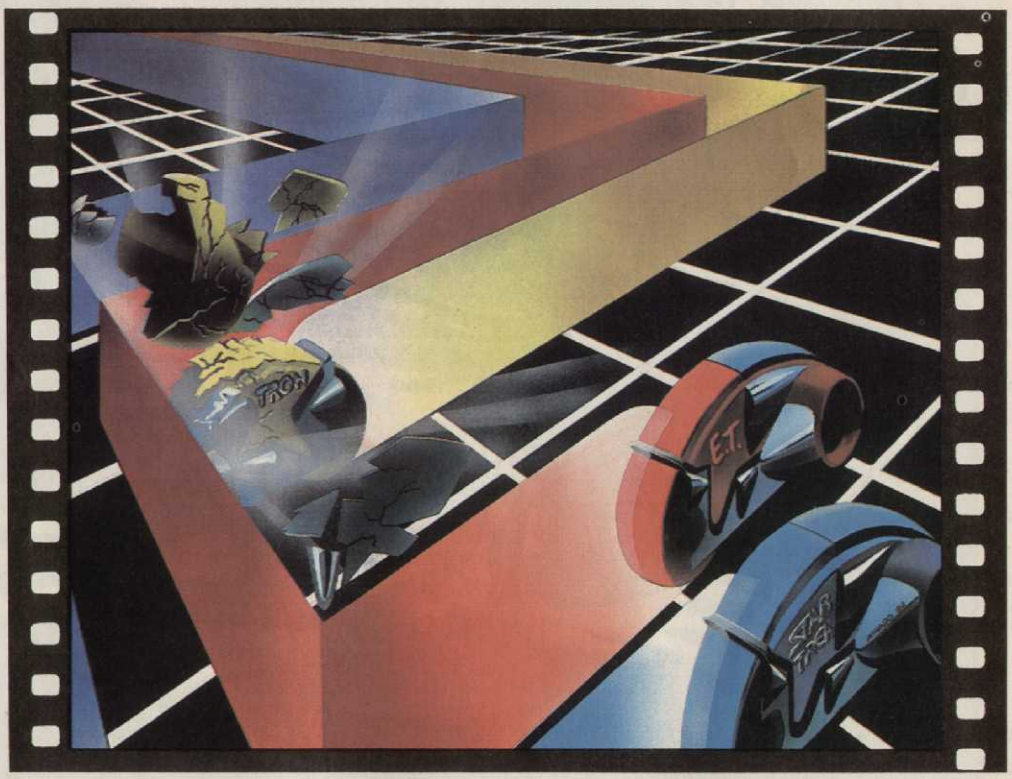

Illustration by Dana Ventura

Its arrival was celebrated with the kind of hype normally reserved for returning astronauts or visiting heads of state. If not for the untimely resignation of a certain Secretary of State, it would have even made the cover of *Time* magazine.

Tron was supposed to be the lock of the season—Hollywood's first offering to a video game delirious audience. But, in a summer of record box office figures, *Tron* was never really a contender.

What happened? Was it the bum rap the film received from the financial community before its general release? Was *Tron*, as one reviewer wrote "...lacking the old-fashioned virtues—plot, drama, clarity, emotion"? Or was there simply too much competition from a pint-sized alien, the return of the Starship Enterprise, and the clang of round three with Rocky Balboa?

"Certainly, there was tremendous competition this summer for the teenaged market," says Jim Garber, director of marketing at Walt Disney Productions. "I also think that we're dealing with a subject matter that, story-wise, may have left some people who aren't familiar with computers or who haven't played video games out of the picture...so to speak."

Disney's troubles began three days before *Tron* opened when several Wall Street analysts panned the film after a screening. The next day, the company's stock plummeted, causing angry officials to promise that security analysts would never again be invited to a Disney press preview. "Ted James' (of Montgomery Securities) comments in *The Wall Street Journal* may have turned some people away from the box office initially," says Garber, who admits that poor word-of-mouth hurt *Tron*.

The critics didn't help either. Many of them found Disney's futuristic romp inside a computer less than exhilarating. Tom Wilhite, Disney's vice-president for motion picture development, explains: "I think the effect of how we sold it, some of the negative reviews, and the whole stock market thing hindered how the picture opened and how it ultimately did by the end of the summer. When you're paying five bucks, people start to think, 'Do I want to see this movie or do I want to see that movie that I've heard nothing negative about?'"

Although the $28 million *Tron* has grossed to date doesn't have the Disney executives dancing in the aisles (or rushing to produce *Tron 2*), they are quick to point out that the technologies learned during the production will come in handy in the very near future.

Currently in the testing phase is an animated feature based on Thomas Disch's short story "The Brave Little Toaster." Boasts Wilhite: "We will do the characters by hand so that they'll have the warmth of Disney characters, but then they'll be inked and painted by computers. The backgrounds will also be rendered by computers, which are capable of creating an airbrushed look." Chances are good, he adds, that the film will be produced in 3D.

Was *Tron* ahead of its time? Wilhite thinks so. "In the next few years, when more and more families have computers in their homes, this kind of movie will do much better because it will reflect a part of people's lives.

"*Tron* was clearly the first of its kind," he maintains. "Nobody can deny us that."

—*Sue Adamo*

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For your Atari Video Computer System™ and Sears Video Arcade.™

PARKER BROTHERS

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Kaboom! Kaplan Quits Activision

Activision has been the shining star of the video game business for the last two years. Ever since president Jim Levy shook hands with four ace software designers in 1979, the company could do no wrong. But, recently, one of Activision's co-founders, Larry Kaplan, resigned. Ironically, he has returned to his former employee: mother Atari. What went wrong?

"Activision and I had different goals, both philosophically and long term," Kaplan says. "I wanted to do hardware. They didn't. Activision is caught in its own rules. It has decided not to do software on a unit until the hardware has two million users. That's a vicious cycle. If we're the biggest software maker, the new hardware would need us making software to push it.

"Emotionally, I wasn't having any fun at Activision anymore. I wanted more voice. Their corporate philosophy and mentality weren't the same as mine. I took it personally because I was a cofounder and it wasn't being run the way I'd like it to be. It was Jim's show."

"Jim's show," according to Kaplan, included designers being presented with gold records for best-selling games and having limousines cart the designers around town at the last Consumer Electronics Show.

"At Activision, Jim Levy is making his analogy to the record industry. He's pushing the superstar approach, and the media loves it. But it's hype, it's exaggeration, it's taking things out of context, and it's lying," Kaplan charges. "It may be minor and not harm anyone, but it's still lying."

Photo by Anne Krueger

Larry Kaplan: "I wasn't having any fun at Activision anymore."

For instance, he points out, designers were quoted as saying things in press releases and on game boxes that they really didn't say. "They make up stories. We had a story about how the Freeway game was designed that was true. But the story used on the back of the box and in the instructions said the designers actually went out, studied, and tried to simulate the different highways in the different levels of the game—like the Santa Monica freeway at two o'clock or Lake Shore Drive. They didn't do that. Now maybe no one believes that anyway—but they didn't do that. It's hype."

By his own admission, Kaplan likes to talk. At Activision, designers were physically, socially and emotionally cut off from the rest of the company, Kaplan claims. Even phone calls were monitored. "They didn't like my bullshitting and socializing. The atmosphere just wasn't fun. I had to ask myself, was it worth making all that money and not having fun?"

While at Activision, Kaplan created the ever-popular Kaboom! (named one of *Omni* magazine's top 10 games of 1981, and still ranked number 13 on the new *Billboard* video game chart) and the video version of Bridge. During three years at Atari, he designed the Air-Sea Battle cartridge, among others.

Kaplan became attracted to game designing after working as a computer programmer on a Missouri River electrical project in the early '70s. Most computer people, regardless of their jobs, love to create games, he says.

Before returning to Atari, Kaplan tried to start his own hardware/software video game venture. Financing was to come from the company that bankrolls Zymos, a chip company co-owned by Jay Minor, another ex-Atari man. When that fell through Kaplan went to Atari, the only company with the finances and willingness to develop a state-of-the-art game system. He was hired on the spot. A self-proclaimed technophile, Kaplan admits he won't be happy unless his job is a fun and challenging search for more and better technology.

—Anne Krueger

Prime-time Coin-op Ads to Continue

Two coin-op manufacturers think they've discovered a new way to lure video gamers —and potential gamers—into the arcades: television advertising. Flushed with the success of its Zaxxon commercial — the first TV ad for an arcade game ever — Sega Enterprises is planning to herald the debut of Pengo, the company's latest game, with a similar campaign.

Summer moviegoers may already be familiar with Atari's ad for Dig Dug, recently chopped to 30 and 60-second spots from its original two-minute length. Atari first showed the ad in theaters across the country before testing it on TV in several cities. At presstime, Atari execs were deciding whether to break it nationally.

Filmed by the special effects crew that shot *Poltergeist*, Dig Dug was in the works before Zaxxon hit the airwaves, claims Don Osborne, a vice-president for marketing at Atari. "We basically have wanted to evaluate the potential of a major advertising effort in the coin-op market," he says. "We're hoping to enhance the

public's awareness of our product, stimulate better earnings, and essentially realize the success of a good product sooner."

Sega vice-president Bob Rosenbaum thinks TV advertising does the job. He says revenues from Zaxxon machines doubled after the commercial aired in Los Angeles and awareness of the game rose 200 percent in some test markets. Small wonder. That ad was created by one of the country's leading computer animation firms, Mathematical Applications Group Inc., a contributor to Disney's *Tron*.

Not all arcade game makers are plugging into TV, though. Bally/Midway vice-president Jim Jarocki points out that his company sells machines to distributors, who in turn vend them to operators (arcades, restaurants, bars, etc.). It's more effective, he says, to reach these middlemen directly through trade publications than TV. This method is also cheaper and takes less time to produce.

Admits an Atari spokesperson: "It took six weeks to do the Dig Dug ad. That's practically the life of a game."

—Eric Schmuckler

They Say It Ain't Porno

Amorously ask someone to your apartment to see your etchings and likely the response will be: "What's an etching?" But, who knows, you might luck-out if you suggest a visit to try out your adult video games.

"Our games aren't really X-rated," explains Stuart Keston, whose Los Angeles-based company American Multiple Industries (AMI) is marketing three VCS-compatible cartridges under the brand name Mystique / Swedish Erotica. "They're actually soft Rs."

The group Women Against Pornography (WAP) strongly disagrees. At a recent protest held outside the Hilton hotel in New York, where Kesten was exhibiting his new wares at an electronics show, WAP members waved signs that read: "Computerized Insanity," "Pornographers are Pimps," and "Stop Making Fun Out of Women's Pain."

Well, judge for yourself. Bachelor Party features an upright groom-to-be, eager for one last fling before taking his wedding vows. He "scores" by touching the ladies, who are lined up Breakout-style. In Custer's Revenge, the virile general negotiates an obstacle course of randomly falling arrows and prickly cacti to reach an unfortunate squaw who is bound to a stake and unable to ward off Custer's unwelcome advances. The big climax comes when they finally meet— pump the "joystick" and rack up bonus "rape" points. Then there's Beat 'em & Eat 'em, in which streetwalkers await the emissions of a crazed john from his rooftop perch. The "suggestive" retail price for each is $49.95.

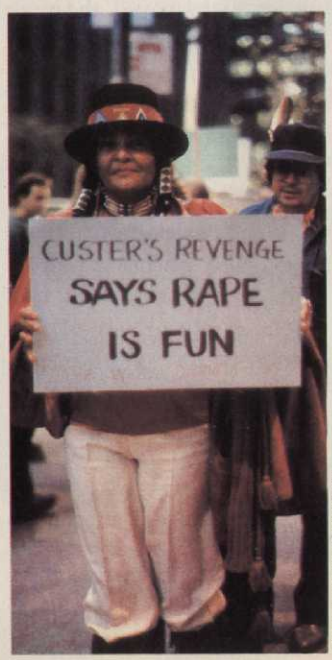

Photo by Perry Greenberg

"There's no violence or venereal disease—we have entertainment in mind," says Kesten, who lets his 11-year-old son play the games, but wouldn't want them available to "kids who aren't my responsibility." AMI's sealed boxes are labeled "Not for

(Continued on page 14)

Who's Fooling Who?

While the record industry blames its current ills on everything from home taping to tight radio playlists, The Who's veteran leader Pete Townshend (standing at left) pokes fun at Pac-Man paranoia on the cover of the band's latest album, *It's Hard*. As members of the group stare straight ahead, a clean-cut punk youth hunches over Atari's Space Duel arcade game, lost in concentration and completely oblivious to one of rock's legendary outfits. The back of the jacket features a close-up of the video screen, where song titles are listed read-out style.

For the band who celebrated the joys of video games' forerunner in "Pinball Wizard" over a decade ago, the album's motif was no random choice, but a visual statement on the way kids have turned their backs on rock 'n' roll for Donkey Kong and Missile Command. Instead of spending five bits on a 45, today's video wizards are dropping countless quarters into Space Duel.

The Who, ever astute observers of youthcult iconography, apparently aren't about to give up the fight for the modern teen's loyalty. But they have no axe to grind. To ease the pain of coast-to-coast travel on their farewell tour, the band is lugging along three different video arcade games, which they set up backstage for every show.

—Roy Trakin

sale to minors."

No such warning is needed for Streaker, an arcade game conceived by Fred Alkire of American Video Games in Birmingham, Ala. The object is to maneuver a naked lady through a maze as she attempts to collect her fallen garments and avoid the police. Streaker is hardly hardcore.

"She looks like Miss Piggy," Alkire insists. "You don't even know she's naked until she starts putting her clothes *on*. We're located in one of the most Baptist sections of the country, and we haven't recieved any complaints yet."

—Howard Mandel

Who'll Stop Rawson Stovall?

Every Wednesday, Rawson Stovall, pencil in hand, spends about two hours at the kitchen table putting together 500 words for his newspaper column on video games, "The Video Beat." When he's done, Stovall gives the copy to his mom who edits it for spelling errors, run-on sentences and faulty punctuation and then types the final draft. The column appears in five Texas newspapers including his hometown *Abilene Reporter-News*.

Photo by Victoria Rouse

On business appointments, Stovall comes prepared: His briefcase is stuffed with resumes, school report cards, press clippings and, best of all, a design for a game called Jumping Jellybeans. When a secretary announces, "There's a young man to see you," few executives expect to be shaking hands with a 10-year-old boy.

But that's Rawson Stovall, a four-foot, three-inch self-proclaimed actor, artist, bookworm, cartoonist, poet and rockhound. Already, he's become the youngest person to ever receive the Governor's Award (for outstanding volunteer service) and recently won the Benny the Bookworm contest when he read 55 books in one month, which translated into a $5,480 donation to the Abilene Mental Health Association.

Video, however, is Stovall's real game. He remembers the first time he played the Atari VCS at a local Sears in Abilene. He was six years old. "I came home and asked my dad if we could get it and he said, 'Awww, that's just a waste of money,'" Rawson recalls. "So years went by, and in 1980 I asked Santa Claus to bring it, and the kids next door got Atari and I didn't. So, in 1981, I said I couldn't depend on Santa Claus, so I raised the money by selling pecans out of my backyard. We shelled, halved, packaged and sold them and made about $175."

When his fourth grade reading teacher at Alta Vista elementary school began producing a weekly television show for her class last year, Rawson and his friends chose to do segments on video games. One thing led to another and soon Rawson found himself at the *Abilene Reporter-News* pitching a weekly column to executive editor Dick Tarpley.

Recalls Assistant Managing Editor John Rice, "Initially there was a slight resistance from the staff. Having a 10-year-old boy

Fire Officials Hose Down Game

Fire officials, worried that video gamers will trade in their joysticks for matchsticks, are doing a slow burn over a new computer game created by Muse Software. Firebug, they claim, is a definite invitation to arson. "It teaches kids fire-setting behavior," says John Lynch of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. "It will make firebugs out of people," asserts Patrick Flynn, a spokesman for the Baltimore Fire Department.

To cool down the firefighters, Muse has repackaged the game slightly. Originally, Firebug, which can only be played on the Apple II, challenged the player with the question: "How good are you at setting fires?" Then the player had to guide a square-like object, with a fuse attached to it, through a building's corridors, reaching an exit and ladder before the fuse burned down and the square disintegrated. The player ran up points by setting fire to the building's walls. The more walls you destroyed, the more points you got.

Not all the steam has been taken out of Firebug, but the player is no longer enticed into "setting fires." Instead, he is asked: "Can you succeed at a test of fire?" Also, the player is told to destroy "the maze," not the walls of a building. Even without the changes, though, Rhonda Uretzky-Miller, Muse's marketing director, considers Firebug "a simple, non-violent game that provides colorful and exciting graphic effects."

The changes have so far drawn mixed reviews. John

(Continued on page 20)

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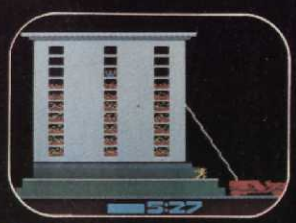
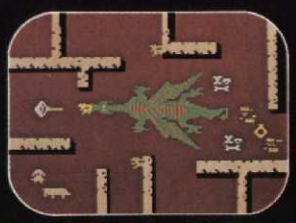


Fire Fighter for Atari. Battle raging flames before they scorch the panicked victim in the building. He races for the roof. Reach him with your ladder. Douse the flames. You haven't much time!

Riddle Of The Sphinx for Atari. Wander through Egypt's Valley of the Kings, seeking to solve the Riddle of the Sphinx. Collect treasures but beware the God Anubis. A must for strategy enthusiasts!

Micro Surgeon for Intellivision. The patient is critically ill. A miniaturized robot moves through the system and removes tumors, blood clots and other ailments. Be careful! White blood cells try to destroy you. It's a race against time.

Beauty And The Beast for Intellivision. The bully's got the girl. Climb the building, floor by floor, but watch out. He's tossing boulders. The higher you go, the harder the going.



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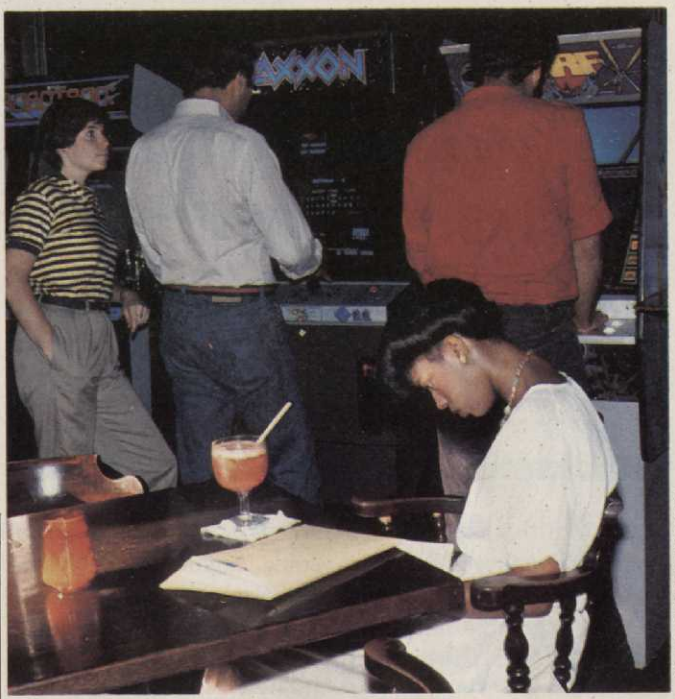
Beefsteak Charlie's Has a Better Idea—Free Video Games

In the restaurant business, the fight for the consumer dollar has taken many forms—from all-you-can-eat salad bars to all-you-can-drink wine and beer come-ons. But if you're into video games, nothing can beat this latest twist: all-you-can-play video games.

That's right. Last August, the New York-based restaurant chain Beefsteak Charlie's unveiled a stunning new promotion at two of its Manhattan establishments: free-of-charge video games. Almost immediately, crowds began forming around the coinless Zaxxon, Pac-Man and Defender machines, their appetite for unlimited video so voracious that management had to hang signs that read "Be Generous to Your Friends—Don't Monopolize the Games" on the walls.



Photos by Sarah Longacre

Have a drink, relax and enjoy the free video action. "I was a snob about video games," admits one patron. "Until this."

Just as quickly, however, a Department of Consumer Affairs official came by and zapped Beefsteak's with a citation for violating New York's "common show" law. Not only are the restaurants operating games without a license—you need one to legally operate more than four games in a location—but both sit in non-arcade zones.

The citation was the first shot in a legal war that could take years to resolve. And Beefsteak's knew it was coming. The chain had been advised beforehand by attorney Sid Davidoff, a Big Apple mover and shaker, that the only way it could successfully open up a game room would be to make the games free—and suffer the immediate consequences, the violation. Davidoff also correctly predicted that Beefsteak's would lose the Consumer Affairs hearing on the violation. "We're ready to take it to the courts," he says.

The sign of the times.

Meanwhile, as the lawyers battle it out, Beefsteak customers appear to be having a ball. The Spahn brothers—Erik, 19, and Josh, 28—have been making it a point to visit the Greenwich Village restaurant twice a week for eye-reddening sessions that usually last about three hours. "I come here strictly for the games," says Erik, after a bout with Zaxxon. "Let's face it: there are nicer bars. But, at least here you can kick back a few beers and play for awhile. It's nice." And admits Josh: "I was a snob about video games...until this."

While both would prefer shorter lines for the more popular games, fewer minors piling into the game area (the policy is strictly 18 years old and over), and less aggressive waitresses (this writer, incidentally, was pressured to buy a drink during a high-speed game of Turbo), they say that most of the players are cooperative and even trade tips. Anyway, Erik thinks he's learned how to handle the waitresses. "Just give them a good tip," he reports, "and they'll leave you alone."

Is this just the beginning of a trend toward free video games in the restaurant business? Some say other restauranteurs are waiting to see how Beefsteak's legal fight turns out before jumping into the fray. But Davidoff, who has dropped a few quarters into arcade games in his lifetime, thinks otherwise.

"I don't think too many restaurants will be willing to make the investment this takes and not many can afford to give up the space," he says. "Video games are an expensive investment."

—David Smith

Stovall

(Continued from page 14)

come in had them curious. But, after they read two or three columns, they were sold like everyone else."

In the first installment, Rawson outlined his purpose: to help "skeptical adults to get their kids beyond the fever craze." In a more recent column he connected video games with the Pythian games of ancient Greece.

Soon after entering fifth grade this year, Rawson began a new phase in his career development—promotion. The game firm Imagic invited him to its Silicon Valley headquarters, subsequently hailed Rawson as a "renaissance child," and announced that the wunderkind would tour the country with the company's software v.p. Dennis Koble.

Whether they were won over by his report cards or his natural sales abilities ("...he could sell barbells to a drowning man," said one write-up) isn't entirely clear. In any event, watch out America. Rawson Law Stovall means business.

—Sue Adamo

A Day in the Life at Beefsteak's

VIDEO GAMES correspondent John Holmstrom may very well have been the first person to learn of Beefsteak Charlie's free-game policy. He's been stopping by the Greenwich Village establishment at 55 Fifth Ave. ever since. According to Holmstrom, a day in the life at Beefsteak's goes something like this:

Photo by Sarah Longacre

4 p.m. This is the best time to get there—when the doors open. Once you're inside and you see all those free video games — Turbo, Zaxxon, Centipede, Donkey Kong, Robotron, Gorf, Space Duel, Ms. Pac-Man, Asteroids Deluxe and Defender—you want to play them all at once! At first you don't play too well 'cause it's fun-time. Make Mario jump into the barrel in Donkey Kong and fry the little sucker. Smash the Zaxxon spaceship into the wall a few times. Crack up in Turbo at super-high speed Wah-hoo! After all those years of trying *not* to lose, now you have the luxury of doing anything you damn well please. Try new patterns, new strategies, experiment all you want—and stop worrying about wasting quarters!

5 p.m. The place is filling up. Time to get serious and impress the crowd. Most of the "spendthrifts" who come here aren't very good, so a decent score sends chills up their spines. It's also about that time when the waitresses start asking if you'd like something from the bar. The prices are reasonable, and the service is polite. By the way, if you don't want anything, that's OK, too.

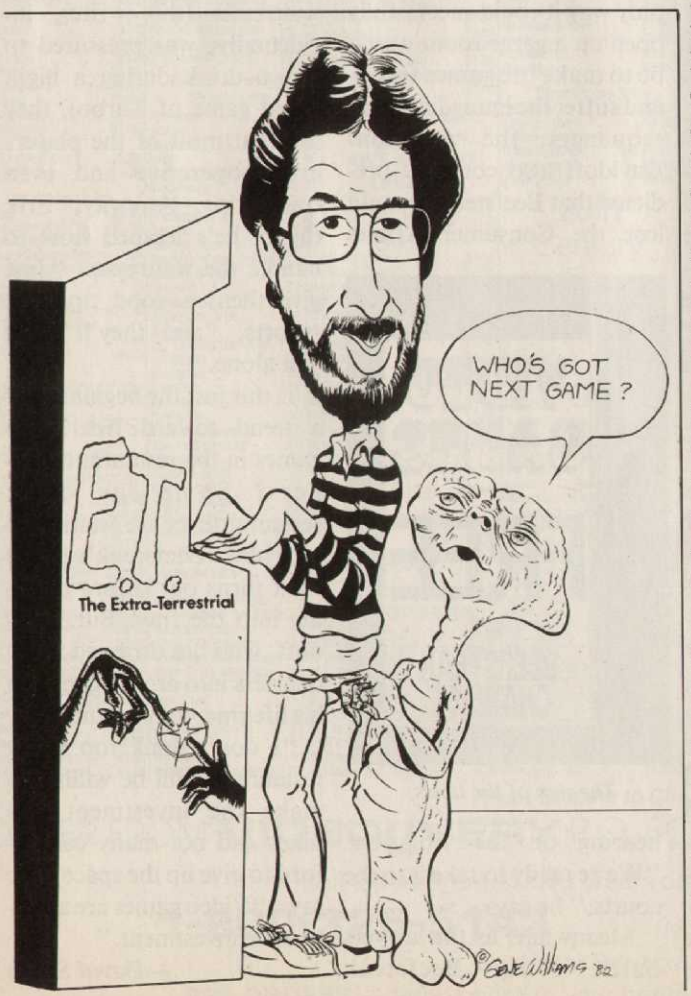
6-8 p.m. This is when you begin to realize how this scene differs from those in almost every other arcade. Here, nobody deposits 20 quarters all over a machine and hogs it for three hours. Even though every machine will be busy for the rest of the night, anyone will let you on if you ask them. It's so civilized!

Interestingly, with money no longer a factor, I've achieved many of my all-time high scores at Beefsteak's. The only thing I can figure is that I'm concentrating less on paying and more on playing.

9 p.m. By now, you're in a video game daze. You're in a feverish, desperate mood. It's a good chance you're just hungry. Well, you've come to the right place. Walk into the main restaurant and chow down a burger or steak, all the shrimp and salad you can eat, and as many pitchers of beer, wine or sangria you can handle. The tab won't even come to a roll of quarters.

10 p.m. You're stuffed, blitzed, and ready to get in your last free licks. The pressure is on. The place closes in an hour, so play any game you can find! QUICK!

11 p.m. Seven hours later, the juice is off and Beefsteak Charlie's is closed. Time to blend into the night. Hey, let's buy some more drinks and play some more video games!



Firebug

(Continued from page 14)

Mulligan, an assistant fire commissioner in New York City, remains unsatisfied. He has appealed to the International Association of Fire Chiefs to protest Firebug, and he's written letters to support several groups that oppose the game. Baltimore's Flynn says he won't pass final judgement until he sees the changes first-hand. But he did say: "Without the original wording, it's (Firebug) nothing. It might as well be a man knocking over filing cabinets."

Meanwhile, firefighters will be able to rest easier over two new fire-related video games on the market: Imagic's Fire Fighter and U.S. Games' Towering Inferno. Both involve rescuing people and putting out fires—not setting them.

—Michael Fine

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Bill Grubb and Dennis Koble

Imagic would like nothing better than to topple Activision from its software perch. But, as Grubb says, "May the best man win."

Bill Grubb and Dennis Koble are not quite the Proctor & Gamble the video game world, though they do represent the kind of teamwork that seems to produce the best possible results if video is your game. Grubb is the career salesman, the type of businessman who spends money to make money and makes a lot of it; Koble is the mad computer scientist, the archetypal video game visionary who creates the games people play. Together, they are as formidable a twosome as Nolan Bushnell and Joe Keenan, or Jim Levy and any one of the designers who helped to found Activision. Together with another team—Brian Dougherty (creative) and Jim Goldberger (marketing)—they dreamt up Imagic Corporation in 1981.

Grubb and Koble had been standing on the sidelines watching the Silicon Valley Square-dancers change partners during the late-'70s when suddenly both bolted for the floor. Each had toiled on the Atari Ranch long enough to learn the trade and decided simultaneously to head out on his own. Six months later, they set up shop down the road a piece from Atari in Los Gatos (which, incidentally, is where Atari's first offices were located). They expect to turn a tidy profit on $50 million sales by the end of '82.

Grubb, 37, is a fast-talking New Yorker, born and raised; Koble, 32, an easy-going Californian, true and blue. Grubb, the president of the company, studied marketing and finance at Fordham University in The Bronx and Seton Hall in New Jersey. Like so many other engineers, Koble is an alumnus of the University of California at Berkeley, where he majored in computer science. Prior to his 18-month stint at Atari, Grubb's resume read: "11 years at Black & Decker—marketing"; Koble started at Applied Technology (he worked on radar warning systems), moved onto NASA (biofeedback) and then Atari (coin-op) in 1976. He was the third programmer Atari ever hired. Koble is presently the v.p. of software development at Imagic.

VIDEO GAMES Editor Steve Bloom spent an afternoon recently with Grubb and Koble at Grubb's ranch-style home in Saratoga, Ca. He reports:

"As you drive down Interstate 280 from San Francisco you gradually come to terms with the fact that you're not in San Francisco anymore. Leaving the Bay Area fog behind, you enter California's now historic Silicon Valley—a sprawl of chrome-and-glass corporate two-stories and their adjacent parking lots that stretch into the distance in all directions. A seemingly endless procession of fast-fooderies and service stations adds to this landscape, which also includes mountain ranges to the east and west and a sun strong enough to support wildly tropical vegetation.

"Bill and Eileen Grubb live on a spic 'n' span suburban loop in Saratoga. Their street is quiet enough to hear the neighbor's backyard conversation. I am greeted by Bill and led to the backyard, where Koble is sitting at a picnic table, eating Laura Scudder pretzels and sipping a Pepsi. There is no beer to be found. And this is Sunday afternoon.

"But even on Sunday afternoon, it's business as usual for Grubb and Koble. Earlier in the day, company employees got together for a leisurely bout with the elements—white-water rafting. As we talk, Grubb is often interrupted by his wife, who needs to know whether he's keeping his 9 a.m. flight to wherever, and other pertinent personal data.

"Grubb's is the stronger of the two personalities—he's clearly the marketing man's marketing man. His lexicon is familiar—'bottom line,' 'third quarter,' 'the marketplace,' 'synergy'; his sales pitch indefatigable. When Grubb says he'd rather not talk about Atari, he means it. "I was always taught that if you don't have something good to say about something, don't say it"

VIDEO GAMES: OK, then let's talk about Imagic.

Bill Grubb: Imagic has grown in one year from nine to 86 employees. We've moved to a much bigger office facility—123,000 sq. ft. A year ago at this time, Activision moved into a 96,000 sq. ft. facility. In 1982, we will ship in excess of $50 million worth of product. No other electronics company has done that before.

VG: Not even Activision?

Grubb: Activision was formed 21 months before Imagic. We have come along and done things more aggressively than they have. For instance, they have two pieces of Mattel (Intellivision-compatible) product. We have five. We're doing products for the Atari 400

At right: Koble and Grubb.

Photos by Jay Yow/Full Spectrum

TRICK SHOT
ATLANTIS

and 800 (computers) and Odyssey 2 as well. We're reacting a little bit more aggressively than they are in trying to get to that leadership position.

VG: It sounds like you don't have much respect for Activision's accomplishments.

Grubb: That's not true. We have the greatest respect for the Activision people. As a matter of fact, I had lunch with Jim Levy (Activision's president) the other day. He's a real mensch in the industry, he really is. We have no axes to grind with those people. It's almost like the old Yankees and Dodgers competition—we're two teams who live on the opposite sides of town who have some real good ballplayers. May the best guy come out on top. I really believe it's either going to be Activision or ourselves.

VG: I'm sure Activision's success had something to do with your decision to leave Atari and start-up Imagic.

Grubb: I had resigned from Atari in January, '81. I decided I needed a change from big corporate life. I'd been in corporate life for 16 years and came to the conclusion that I wanted to spend less time on a jet plane and more with my family. I saw an opportunity to make a good deal of money by going into the manufacturer's representative business. So I started New West Marketing. One of the companies I was repping was Activision. I thought they were doing a tremendous job, but felt that there was room for someone to do as well as they were doing. At the time, Dennis called me. Apparently, he was having the same thoughts as I was.

Dennis Koble: I was considering going out on my own. I had been with Atari for five-and-a-half years, which is a long time in this Valley. The standard dream of every engineer is to start your own company someday and become rich. Hey, this was the opportunity I'd been waiting 11 years for. I knew a lot about engineering, but nothing about marketing. The more Bill and I talked, the more we seemed like a natural match.

Grubb: I was also doing some licensing for Mattel back then. The week after I spoke with Dennis, I was down there (Mattel's headquarters in Hawthorne, Ca.) and Jim Goldberger—who happens to be a guy I tried to hire at Atari—asked to speak to me privately. He and his roommate, Brian Dougherty, who was the senior engineer there, were thinking of putting together an Activision-type company that would only do Intellivision software. Well, it must have been fate that brought us together. We stayed up until 2 a.m. that night and agreed we could all work together.

Grubb: "If the next Pac-Man was available, we'd license it—if it was economically feasible."

Then, I wrote a business plan to raise venture capital. We felt we needed $2 million to get the company started. . . and we got it ($1 million from Kleiner, Perkins, Caulfield, Byer & Doerr and $500,000 each from Merrill-Pickard I and Sysorex). There were five other people who were originally part of the nucleus: two Atari game designers (Rob Fulop and Bob Smith) and three other software/hardware people. Those were the original nine people that founded Imagic on Day One, which was July 17, 1981.

VG: I don't mean to beleaguer the point, but comparisons to Activision are hard to ignore. Was there a policy from Day One to design games from scratch and not get involved in arcade game licensing? Like Activision.

Grubb: We've never had a policy. . . If the next Pac-Man was available to be licensed we'd license it—if it was economically feasible.

Koble: Bill doesn't necessarily feel the exact way I do, but I've always liked the idea of licensing as little as possible so that we could create our own reputation. I'd prefer that a year from now we could be licensing Imagic product to other manufacturers—say, for instance, at least the name of a game to a coin-op manufacturer. That would make me feel really good.

Grubb: I can't tell you who they are, but we have been approached by a few coin-op people. If we have a really hot game and someone wants to do a coin-op of it, why not? But as far as us buying a license, I don't think Dennis has any objections at all to us making more money in that particular area.

Koble: No problem with me. If the right product comes along, we'll license it. But you have to wonder about licensing the number 10 coin-op game. I mean, what are you buying?

VG: Let's talk about some of your latest games. What's the story behind Atlantis and Cosmic Ark?

Koble: Well, basically I did Atlantis and Rob Fulop did Cosmic Ark. I can remember the day in the lab when me and Rob decided to tie the two games together. He was working on Reaction, a shoot-'em-up type game that was the precursor to Cosmic Ark and we started kicking around the idea of the survivors from Atlantis showing up in Cosmic Ark with the mission to go from planet to planet getting two of every creature from these various planets to repopulate Atlantis. We just thought it would be neat.

VG: That's pretty wild. But why a game based on Atlantis in the first place?

Koble: There are a lot of different

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE! SEE PAGE 4

5 EXCITING NEW GAMES!

US GAMES NEWS

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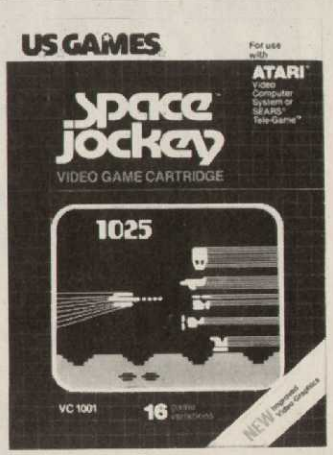

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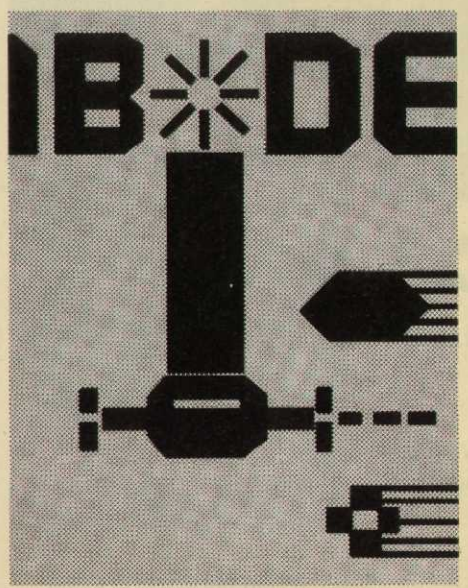

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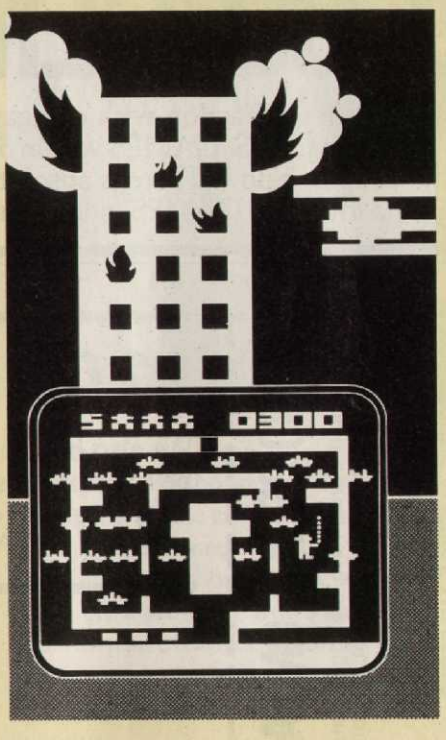

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reasons. Sometimes you go into a game development and you have a crystal clear idea of what you want to do. Atlantis is a good example. I had been wanting to do Atlantis for a really long time. I knew exactly what I wanted to do, but then it's a matter of what the final product looks like. Usually it's some percentage of what you imagine. Atlantis turned out to be 95 percent of what I imagined.

VG: (To Grubb) How much say do you have in all of this?

Grubb: Every week each project is reviewed. We look at where it is, how much it has progressed. There are ideas that get killed.

Koble: Yeah, we kill a bunch of them.

Grubb: I have to make one point, and it's a very egotistical point, but I just want to make it for kicks. I looked at Cosmic Ark when all it had was squares. From a marketing standpoint, that didn't excite me. So I said, "Rob, make it into a flying saucer." He did, and all of a sudden the game took off from there.

It was also my idea to do Firefighter. I'm from one of those Irish Catholic families in New York—you know, 14 brothers and sisters, and all the nieces and nephews—so I've been around kids all my life. The all-time favorite children's book has got to be the one about the fire engine. It's a very simple story that we've translated into video. Let's face it: I'm really a latent game designer.

Koble: Yeah, everybody's a game designer—everybody's got an idea.

Grubb: I promise those are my two for the next five years.

VG: What do you think of Activision's rock-star approach to video game designers?

Grubb: Our designers really don't want to be rock stars. They want their personal lives to remain personal, they want to be able to enjoy their work, enjoy the fruits of their labor, and be ordinary happy-go-lucky Americans like anyone else.

VG: Dennis?

Koble: I don't know. It's fun to be known and all the rest of it—the whole ego thing. But I guess I'd just as soon be rich and anonymous as rich and famous.

VG: I guarantee that after this article comes out you won't be able to walk the streets again without being mobbed.

Koble: I guess I'll have to take my chances... You know, it's not as if nobody knows who we are. Two weeks ago I got a phone call from one of our new student trainees and just casually told him that he'd be working with Rob Fulop on a project. "Rob Fulop?" he said with this reverential awe in his voice. "Boy, that's going to be an honor working for Rob Fulop." I thought it was hilarious.

Koble: "I guess I'd just as soon be rich and anonymous as rich and famous."

VG: How would he know Rob Fulop?

Koble: Most of the kids we have in are real avid game players. It's a pretty open secret that Rob did Demon Attack for us and Missile Command and Night Driver (the VCS versions) for Atari.

VG: What did you work on when you were at Atari?

Koble: Oh, I did a bunch of games. Dominoes, which was a version of Gremlin's Blockade, the precursors of Surround. Sprint 2, which is still a good game. Avalanche, which I can truly say was a totally original game. A little product called Touch Me, which was a hand-held version of Milton Bradley's Simon, which was Milton Bradley's version of Atari's coin-op Touch Me.

Grubb: And I was the one who killed that project.

Koble: Fortuitously as it turned out. And from there I went on to become the manager of consumer software, which is what I did during my two-and-a-half years at Atari.

VG: (To Grubb) What brought you to Atari?

Grubb: It's a long story. Back in '75, I came out to California for the first time on vacation and fell in love with the place. I got in touch with a headhunter out here immediately, but it wasn't until October of 1978 that he contacted me concerning a position at Atari. I received an offer from Ray Kassar (Chief Executive Officer) and Manny Gerard (Office of the President, Warner Communications), but we just couldn't get together on a number of issues. The following June, Kassar asked me to be the Vice-President of Marketing & Sales for the video game division. I accepted and started in a couple of weeks.

What I brought to the organization was some real strong professional disciplines in consumer product marketing. I was a firm believer in television advertising. I was a strong believer in selling to people like K-Mart and Long's Drugs. I brought in rebate programs. I consider myself a small part in the Atari success story.

VG: What was the reaction inside Atari when Intellivision was announced?

Koble: Oh, we had major disdain for Intellivision when it first came out. It was overpriced. It had a heat problem. We didn't see how they could ever build the thing. The games were atrocious as far as we were concerned. Difficult to

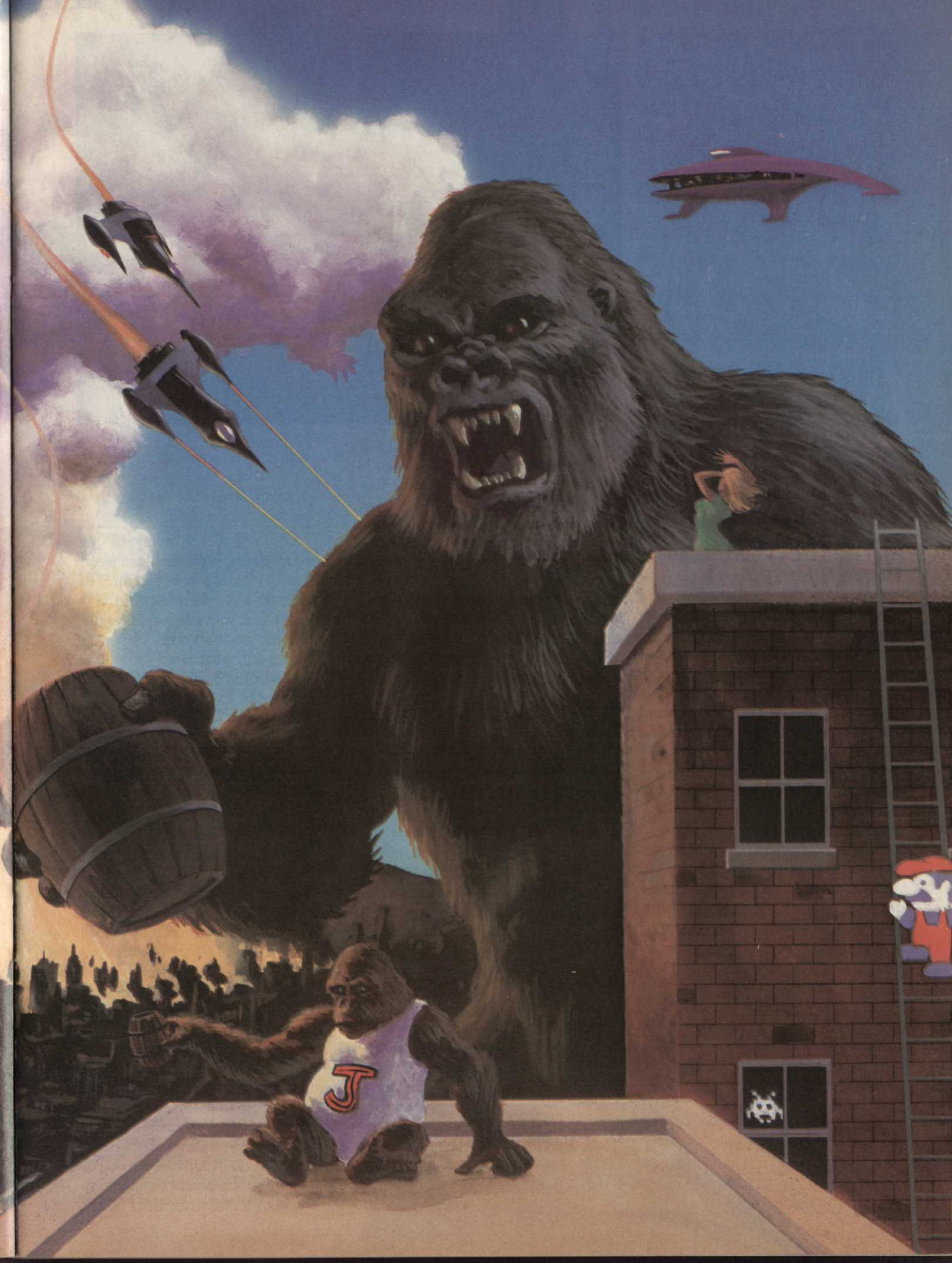
(Continued on page 81)

Zen & the Art of Donkey Kong

By Mark Jacobson

Woke up this morning with an intense craving for Japan. Crawled over to the tube and flipped on *Mothra,* wondered if the two tiny princesses who sing to the big bug grew up to be Pink Lady, and felt a little better. Then I went out for some sushi. Scarfed (can you truly "scarf" food that looks like tinker toys?) some kappa maki, maguro, ebi. Still unsatisfied. So got on the subway,

Illustration by Richard Hescox



pretended it was the "Bullet Train" to Kyoto with Mount Fuji rising above the smog layer in the distance, made it up to Fascination in Times Square, and threw quarters into Donkey Kong.

Let the new wavers slice off their hair, suburbanites brag about gas mileage, and businessmen get awestricken by Theory Z. When I want Japan, I head for Donkey Kong. Got to be honest: I'm an old fart pinball nonwizard who's yet to see the elevators, except on the machine of the 8-year-old juvenile delinquent playing next to me. But bathing in the radiating glow of the Donkey Kong screen enlightens me, like an electronic muse.

The question then for today is: Philosophically speaking, do Japanese video games differ from their American counterparts? The answer is... (game show music here, Richard Dawson kissing a housewife on the mouth)... a complicated one, of course. After all, we're talking about Japan.

"What other culture could have created Godzilla as a symbol for the horror of the atomic age and then turn him into a lovable, almost goofy savior of children? After all, we're all, we're talking about Japan."

Theory #1: "Up and Down, not In and Out"

When delving into the essence of a thing, it often helps to examine its outer appearance, especially when this exterior carries with it historical import. Soon, given the usual trend of global capitalism, American and Japanese games may all look and play the same, but as of now they still retain some of the elements of their respective cultures. When I was in Tokyo, I spent hours in noisy, grubby places called "Pachinko parlors." These are Japanese arcades filled with rows of Pachinko machines. I never quite got good at it, but Pachinko is essentially an upright pinball game with a two-dimensional board, face-high to the player. You deposit silver balls into the cabinet, which then filter from the top of the machine to the bottom. The idea is to capture the balls in the little "houses" on the board for "reward" balls that you can exchange for prizes.

Pachinko is very popular in Japan, and its basic set-up is seen in many of the "flat" maze video games coming from Nippon. The first screen in Donkey Kong is the virtual video equivalent of Pachinko. Space Invaders, with its rows of descending aliens, is another example of "up and down."

On the other hand, Americans have long preferred the three-dimensional "coming-at-ya" feeling of a horizontal approaching ball. With all of the pinball companies going into video you can see many of these distinctly pinball characteristics turning up on the little TVs in the arcades. Stuff is always flying at you in American games.

Theory #2: The Decline of the Sperm Game

I was going over the differences between East and West video game styles with Eugene Jarvis, the 27-year-old designer of such "hardcore" games as Robotron, Stargate, and Defender, the other day when he brought up the notion that the Japanese, with their "easier" games were "giving a boost to the novice player, but ripping off the expert." If this continued, Jarvis maintained, it would wipe out the cult of the "pinball wizard" and the "video freak." I thought this over and decided it was absolutely true. Top Japanese games like Donkey Kong and Pac-Man are far more accessible to the "novice" and appeal to a wider group of people. They are colorful, cartoony, friendly, inviting. The "plots" are basically benign. Mario's love for the girl in Donkey Kong, and his persistence in pursuing her, is sort of sweet. Pac-Man's dot-eating proclivities are nothing if not cute. My mother-in-law, a Pac-Man fan who doesn't care for many of the American games, says "eating things is much nicer than blowing them up." In fact, Pac-Man is often described as a woman's game, with all the implications of the term "woman's drink."

This is exactly what Jarvis was talking about. Formerly, a typical video game player might be a warty teenager, a *National Lampoon* reader, blasting AC-DC in his room, who went to the arcade to kick a machine's butt. "From shit to God for a quarter," Jarvis commented. The games this type of player favors are almost invariably the American ones: Tough to play, intimidating to the novice, shooting-driving-destroying paranoid filled games. "Sperm games," Jarvis calls them. But now, he went on, these elitist video cowboys might be as extinct as their doggiepunching pinball forerunners. Says Jarvis: "How can you feel cool if your mother is playing the same arcade? It's like she put on your Led Zep record and liked them better than you."

A reason for this trend can be found in the Japanese idea of the "youth-culture." Quite simply, there isn't one. In Japan, a trip to the arcade is often a family outing, which probably accounts for why Japanese games tend to be easier to play. (Nintendo's *Japanese* version of Donkey Kong is a breeze compared to the company's American one.) So, as

video games begin to break big, demographically, in the States, it makes sense that the games leading the pack would be the "less intense" Japanese creations.

Theory #3: Bomb Innocence

Ever wonder where the Japanese come up with bizarro notions like making the "Carpenter" in Donkey Kong an Italian?I dunno, he looks Italian to me, and I hear he looked Italian enough to the American ad agency who handles Nintendo's account to name him Mario (the Japanese simply call him "jumpman" — but they did come up with Donkey Kong, which means "stupid monkey"). Japanese pop culture is full of weird items. Most of the cartoons on their television, stuff never intended for export, feature blonde and blue-eyed heroes (i.e., Astroboy) and heroines. This, from a country that is as close to a "pure" race as there is in the world. In Japan, almost everyone is "Japanese." I have always imagined this apparent free association had something to do with a twisted inferiority complex that somehow, coupled with national grace, came out being very winning and innocent.

This pop culture innocence runs deep: The cartoon shows, like the video games, are not just for kids—they play round the clock. If you stay at a ryokan (a Japanese-style hotel), you'll find stacks of magazines to read on your futon, almost all cartoon books. Even the sex-porno lit is done in cartoons. Call it extended childhood, call it a preponderance of ghostlike unreality surrounding daily life. Whatever, it turns up all over, and the playfulness of the video games is only one aspect.

What other culture could have created Godzilla as the symbol for the horror of the atomic age and then turn him into a lovable, almost goofy savior of children? And why would Nintendo resurrect King Kong in a video game? Could it be that the Japanese are simply more at ease than we are with the all-too-obvious burgeoning terrors of the modern world, more at home with technology and less afraid of its dubious side effects, and therefore not nearly as paranoid about the potential apocalyptic visions swirling inside humanity's head? Could this have something to do with having already experienced, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, what we all fear? After all, what's the driving force of most American video games? Isn't it dread?

Theory #4: Buddha's Bluebeam Screen

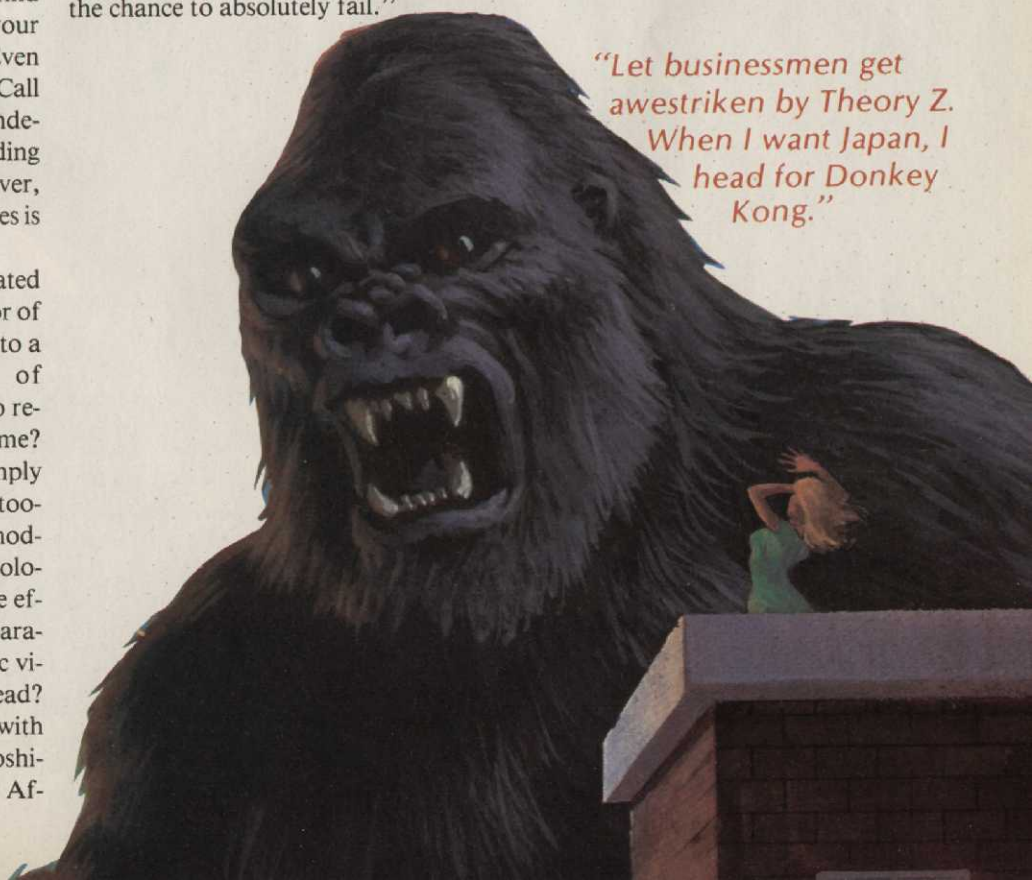
Eugene Jarvis has a pretty philosophical outlook on his world within a box. The metaphysical differences between American and Japanese games, he says, "comes down to a concept of Free Will. Japanese games are basically pattern games. There are set paths, predetermined courses. The attitude is life is a rigged thing, you've got to recognize the correct way to go and go that way. Like in Scramble and Donkey Kong, there isn't a lot of choice about which way to move your man. You either do it a certain way, or you're going to get zapped. Just follow the *right* way and you'll win. It's like there's a trick to happiness, and if you know it, you'll be happy.

"American games are more random," Jarvis continues. "In Tempest or Defender, you can go whichever way, basically, you want. There's no pattern, the grid isn't a fixed thing. You go on your competence, abstract skill is what counts. You don't have to memorize anything, no teacher is asking you, 'Well, was Lake Michigan discovered in 1519 or 1615?' Sure, you can get blasted out in the first minute, but that's life. American games give you the chance to absolutely fail."

Listening to all this made me think of an article in a recent *Harper's* magazine which purports to explain the Japanese character to Americans and vice-versa. The article depicts the American hero as a lone ranger riding off into the sunset, the Japanese hero as the person who, by most closely conforming to the path prescribed as perfect, contributes the greatest good to the group as a whole. A close look at each country's video game products bears this thesis out.

But, this is a whole lot to think about when you're trying to dodge a fireball and jump onto a moving elevator platform. A smart and shifty player wouldn't want to get weighted down with this sort of baggage. Still, being a reporter at heart (and an 8,000-point Donkey Kong player at best), I asked a preteen kid named Johnny, who announced himself as being "from uptown" and wore a green running suit, if he saw a difference between American games and Japanese games.

"No difference," he said, continuing to throttle his joystick. "Just line'em up, I'll knock 'em down. Watch me carve my name in this one." Which he did. A moment later, with more than 100,000 points to his credit, Johnny typed "J 127" into the machine's program. He'd just made the highest score of the day on Donkey Kong. So I figured, you pays your quarter, you takes your choice. ▲



"Let businessmen get awestriken by Theory Z. When I want Japan, I head for Donkey Kong."

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Video Games' Holiday Gift Guide

Video gamers have the right stuff, right? But will they have the right stuffings in this year's Christmas stockings? Suggestion: Browse through the next 12 pages before spending another quarter.

Photography by Rob Gray

The long-awaited Atari 5200 system ($269.95) is finally here. Play updated and enhanced versions of Pac-Man, Super Breakout, Space Invaders, Galaxian, Missile Command and Defender, the arcade sensation, Centipede, and the 400/800 hit Star Raiders ($39.95 each). Baseball, Football and Soccer ($31.95) are next.

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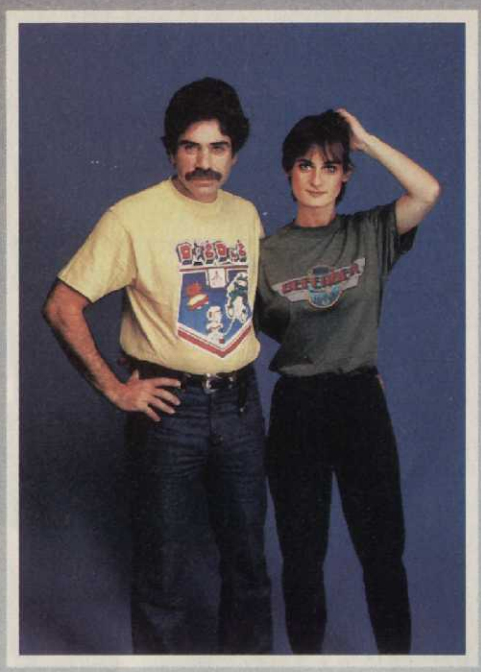
Adding a touch of yellow to the season best known for its reds and greens is going to be easy this year. In fact, it may be hard to avoid. A new generation of Pac-Man products has something for everyone. You'll lose your marbles playing Milton Bradley's Pac-Man board game ($10-12), below. MB also has a Pac-Man card game and Pac-Man puzzle for those who just can't munch enough. One place to save your arcade quarters is in Tomy's Pac-Man bank ($4.50), bottom. Just slip a coin in his hand, lower the arm and . . . gulp.

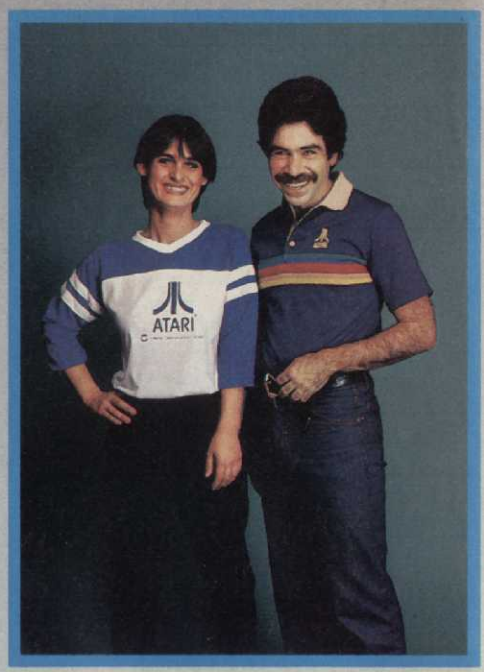
If there's soap on a rope, why not Pac-Man on a string? Duncan's Pac-Man yo-yo ($2.99) features "video action" graphics.

Get wet with Tomy's Wonderful Waterful Pac-Man ($5), top left, or let Pac-Man take flight with this frisbee ($3.50), top right, from the Atari Club. Tomy's battery-op Tomytronic Pac-Man ($55), above, loses little in the translation.

Just wind up Tomy's Pac-Man ($2.25), left, and his lady friend ($2.50) and they're off! Tomy's Pocket Pac-Man ($2), above left. Lace 'em up, Pac-style, above right, ($.88).

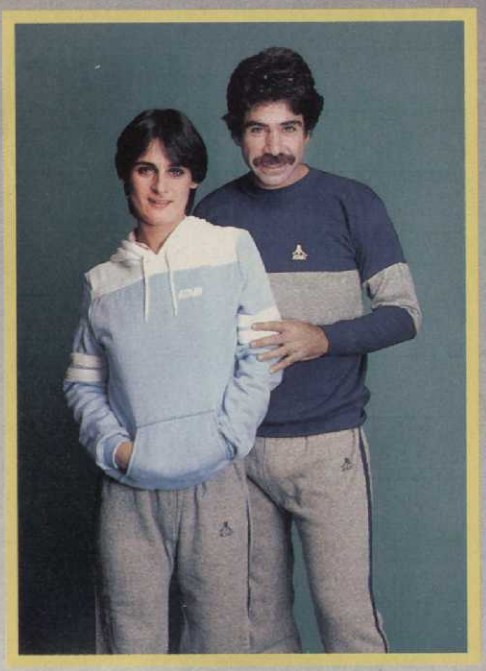
If you're an arcade owner, or at least operate a few games in your local 7-11, these latest fashions are available to you and your customers through Atari Customer Service (ACS). They'll know at a glance what your game is with these colorful T-shirts. Dig-Dug ($6.50), left, is from ACS, while Defender ($7.95), right, can be ordered (by anyone!) through the Atari Club.





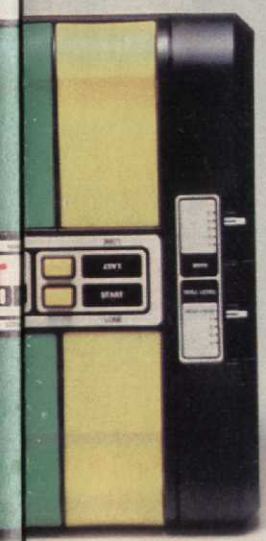
This football jersey ($9.55), left, also comes in red and white and features ¾ length sleeves and a classic V-neck. The rainbow shirt ($14.50), right, is a cotton/poly blend and is also available with a white background.

Mission: Save the earth from the waves of attacking aliens in Stargate ($64.95), top left. Then, untangle the cobwebs in Spiders ($55), top center. Both are from Entex. Test your Tic-Tac-Toe and Blackjack skills against Parker Brothers' Merlin ($32), top right. Merlin includes six different games and is capable of 20 different electronic sounds. Possibly the best TV-game system now available is ColecoVision (Coleco, $225), above. For more details, see Hard Sell on page 72.



Working up a sweat on Gravitar? This jogging outfit (shirt, $13.11; pants $13.63), right, is just for you. Sweat pants ($12.63) combined with a hooded pullover sweat shirt ($18.62), left.

Top off any outfit with an Atari baseball cap ($4.95).



It looks and plays like a TV-game system, but where's the TV? GCE's Vectrex ($200) system, right, has a monitor built into it. The line-up of games includes arcade faves like Scramble, Berzerk, and Rip-Off. (For more information see "Hard-sell," page 72). Can your brain cells outlast Milton Bradley's Super Simon ($45-50), left? There are more than 20 ways to tackle this color and sound sequence game. For solo or team play.

Entex knows a winner when it sees one. Super Alien Invader 2, left, is an updated version of guess what? Rescue turtlettes in Turtles, center. Pilot an armed chopper in Super Cobra, top. All sell for around $55.

The G.A.M.E.S. Super Joystick ($29.95), left, is a rugged and reliable controller for the VCS, Atari 400 & 800 and ColecoVision. Spectravision's Quick Shot ($13.95), above, has a joystick and two firing mechanisms. For the VCS, Atari 400 & 800 and VIC-20.

What'll they think of next? Solar-powered electronic games, of course. Bandai's Invaders of the Mummy's Tomb, left, takes place in and around a pyramid. Defend your camel from attacking snakes and scorpions outside; avoid mummies and spiders while capturing hidden treasures within. Escape from the Devil's Doom, right, is one helluva way to have a good time. Be an angel and try it out. Only $30 each.

Oh, those messy cartridges. . . what is a TV-gamer to do? Organize them with the Atari Program Case ($9.95), left, an eight-cart album or the Video Game Caddy ($2.99), foreground, from Loose Leaf Industries (also available in larger sizes). Kustom Kreations' 20-cart storage cabinet ($8.95), right, is for Atari and VCS-compatible cartridges only. The company also manufactures a model for Intellivisioners. Available through G.A.M.E.S.

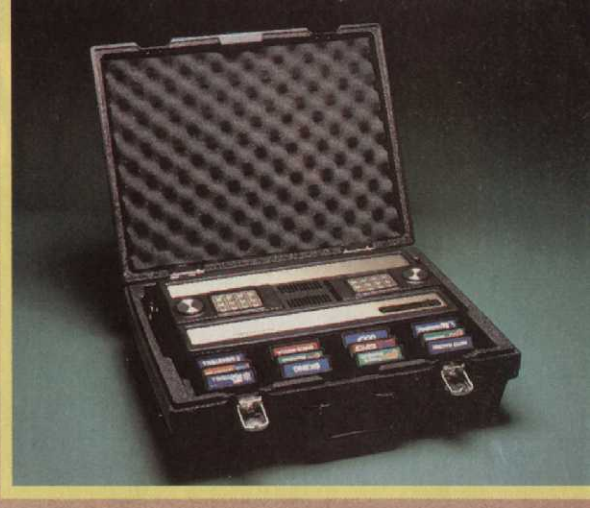
This table-top Game Center ($39.95), below, fits the VCS ($199), controllers and up to 27 cartridges. From the Atari Club.

Wico has some of the best controllers around. The Joystick ($29.95), top, and the Famous Red Ball Joystick ($34.95), above, have arcade-type grips. Both feature eight-way maneuverability and can be used with the VCS, Atari 400 & 800, and VIC-20.

The Starplex Deluxe Video Game Controller ($29.95), features rapid and single-shot firing and separate left, right (or thrust) and down buttons. Great for Defender!

The Fingertip Controller from KY Enterprises ($19.95), has four directionals and a rapid-fire button.

When you gotta go, you gotta go. Constructed of high-density polyethylene, the Intellivision Carrying Case ($39.95), right, stores everything from the base unit to as many as 20 game cartridges. Available through Intellivision Game Club, it's manufactured by Southern Case, Inc., which also makes a Travel Master Universal case for the VCS. Put your Intellivision or VCS and accessories in order with Imagic's Video Storage Center ($29.95), below. This TV-game album, far left, from Sales Aids Inc., ($6.95), keeps your carts clean. Kustom Kreations' Carousel storage cabinet ($34.95), left, has room for 44 Intellivision cartridges. Available through G.A.M.E.S.



Give your Intellivision (list price: $299) disc controllers joystick capabilities with C&T Creations' Skil-Stick ($5.99/package of two).

The Pro Console 1 ($24.95) fits the VCS joystick and paddle controls and is weighted for optimum player control. From Direct Market Group.

The Super Stick ($39.95), left, is a durable controller and arcade-size firing button in one. Use with Atari 400 & 800 and VIC-20. From D-Zyne Video Productions.

Keep your consoles dust, dirt and Coke-free with these water resistant covers ($7.95) from G.A.M.E.S.

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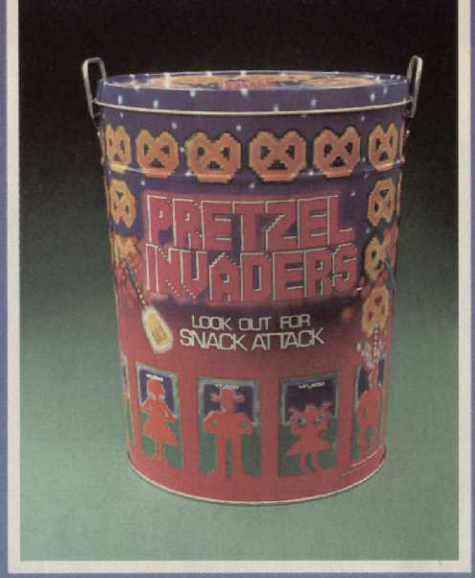
TO PLAY WITH JOURNEY?

UP TO NOW, YOU'VE HAD IT EASY.

...or to Sears, Roebuck and Company.

The popular arcade game Frogger has leapt into the board game circuit. The object of this adaptation, from Milton Bradley ($7.99-8.99), is the same. See your three frogs safely through a busy highway and choppy river to their swampy homeland.



Pretzel Invaders ($18) is just the thing for a snack attack. Packaged in a colorful metal Space Bucket are 40-oz. of Bavarian-style pretzels. From Universal Foods.

Coleco's Frogger (under $60), below, mimics the arcade game with its four-way joystick, and score and "remaining frogs" indicators. Jump to it! The arcade hit Scramble goes battery-op in this version by Tomy ($60), bottom.

Ward off hoards of alien attackers in this hand-held version of Defender by Entex ($59.95), below. Astrocade ($299.95), bottom, is for gamers! Not only can you play more than 40 programs—Gunfight, Scribbling, and Checkmate are included—but a Basic cartridge lets you write your own. Formerly known as the Bally Professional Arcade.

The aliens come out in full force in Tomy's Tomytronic Cosmic Combat ($45), left. Thwart the efforts of a pesky pack of mice in Bandai's Frisky Tom ($50), below.

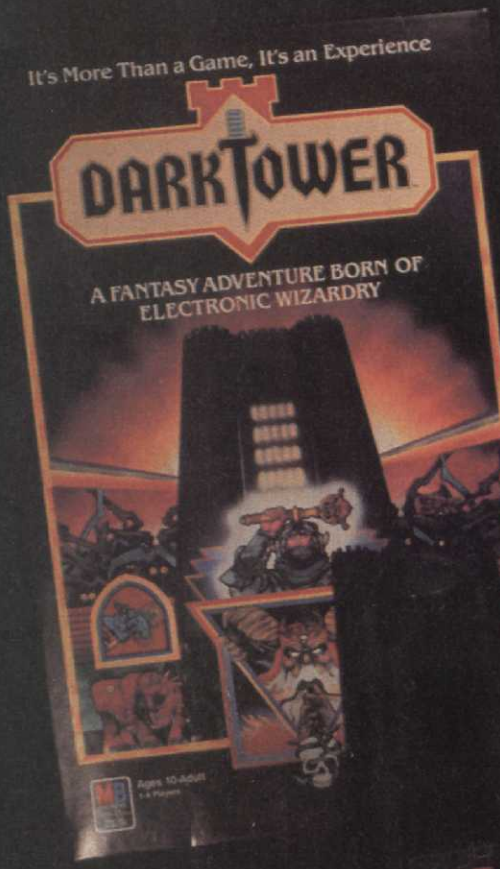
Bring the electronic world of *Tron* home. Left to right: Tomytronic's Tron ($65) pits you against the evil Sark and the Master Control Program in three exciting games. One thing you can do with these plastic replicas of the *Tron* gang (Tomy, $3.50 each) is seat them in the Tomy Light Cycles ($9.50), pull the rip cord, and they're off! Suspended in the center: Duncan's Tron yo-yo ($2.99). It glows in the dark!

Entex's AdventureVision ($74.95), below right, is the table-top game you don't have to throw away. Four cartridges (under $15 each)—Turtles, Super Cobra, Space Force and Defender (included)—make up the current library... Forty-nine stories is a long way up. Especially when some crazy coot is flinging flower pots down. Three falls and you're a goner in Bandai's Crazy Climber ($50), below right. Shoot down the mothership before she blasts you in Bandai's Missile Invader ($25), bottom.

It's a bird. It's a plane. No, it's The Voice ($80), below. Insert this speech and sound effects module into North American Phillips' Odyssey 2 ($199), plug in any game from the Voice Series (such as Type & Tell, S.I.D. The Spellbinder and Nimble Numbers N.E.D.). You'll be the talk of the neighborhood.

You don't have to be a computer whiz to compete with Fidelity Electronics' Sensory Chess Challenger 9 ($165), but it helps. A touch-sensitive surface informs it of your every move and the squares light up to indicate the computer's counterattacks. It's just one of a whole line of Challenger games.

It's More Than a Game, It's an Experience



Parker Brothers' Dark Tower ($45-50), left, is a fantasy board game with an electronic twist. Punch in your moves on the computerized tower and read the results of your strategies in the windows.

An electronic dive control center reports that a treasure chest is near in Parker Brothers' Lost Treasure ($35). Dive to find it. A computer-controlled robber is on the loose in Parker Brothers' Stop Thief ($35), far right. Your crime scanner tracks him down (he's in the subway). Catch him if you can.

Wico's Command Control Trackball ($69.95) left, is an arcader's delight. Custom models available for the VCS, VIC-20, TI's 99/4A, Apple II, TRS-80 and the Odyssey 2.

Commodore calls it the "friendly" computer. The VIC-20 ($299.95), above right, comes with Basic, a 65-key keyboard and 5K of memory. A line of peripherals, including the Datassette ($75), above left, disk drive, printer and controllers are available. Software includes the arcade games Omega Race and Gorf, and other original titles.

Wildfire ($45) is Parker Brothers' hand-held offering for the pinball wizard in all of us. It features flippers and bumpers, and the scoring and sounds of the real thing. Pocket Simon ($20-28) by Milton Bradley looks, sounds (including that embarrassing "razz" that tells you you've erred) and plays like the original.

Lights, action, roll 'em! Monopoly has gone Hollywood with the new electronic Playmaster ($55), above. Place it in the middle of the Monopoly board and watch the Playmaster do its thing. It acts as auctioneer, dice thrower and bank.

You don't have to be rich to own a TV-game system anymore. Emerson's Arcadia-2001 lists for $200 but can be found for half that. Twenty-four cartridges have been announced for the system, including Red Clash, Pleiades and Jungler.

A list of manufacturers and their addresses appears on page 82

This is COLECOVISION™

The Arcade Quality Video Game System

The Most Advanced Video Game System You Can Buy
ColecoVision was designed for what you had in mind–a great game system that's expandable into a great computer system.

Arcade Quality Graphics
ColecoVision graphics have the superior resolution and brilliant color of real arcade games. And this new advanced level of quality holds true for every part of the system.

Plays The Best
ColecoVision has arcade quality controls–joystick, fire and jump buttons that make it easy to play. And ColecoVision offers a library of your favorite arcade games like Donkey Kong™ (which comes as a bonus with ColecoVision), Turbo™, Zaxxon™ and Cosmic Avenger™. Sports and educational games, too. Even ColecoVision's exclusive new Smurf™ game based on the #1 TV cartoon series.

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ColecoVision plays more games than any other system, because ColecoVision is an *expandable* system. By using ColecoVision's first expansion module you'll be able to play all of the Atari® VCS™ compatible cartridges.

COLECOVISION EXPANSION MODULE #1 ALLOWS YOU TO PLAY ALL ATARI® VCS™ COMPATIBLE CARTRIDGES. AVAILABLE IN NOVEMBER PENDING FCC APPROVAL.

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When you buy ColecoVision, you've already bought a sophisticated *computer* ready to accept expansion modules of all kinds. And in 1983, you'll be able to "activate" ColecoVision's amazing memory by simply plugging in a keyboard, a printer and other computer accessories. This expansion feature is your assurance that your ColecoVision will always keep pace with "state of the art" developments in electronics.

ColecoVision–a great game system that's expandable into a great computer system. The most advanced video game system you can buy.

YOUR VISION IS OUR VISION COLECOVISION™

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Dad, This is the system we've both been waiting for. ColecoVision has everything! It plays the best arcade games – It looks and plays just like the real arcade. And it plays the most arcade games. It's got a plug-in attachment that will allow us to play all of Atari's VCS games!

Bill

P.S. And look at this, Dad, ColecoVision is also a computer! And that's important – because, you know, I don't want to just play games. Could we go to the store and take a look?

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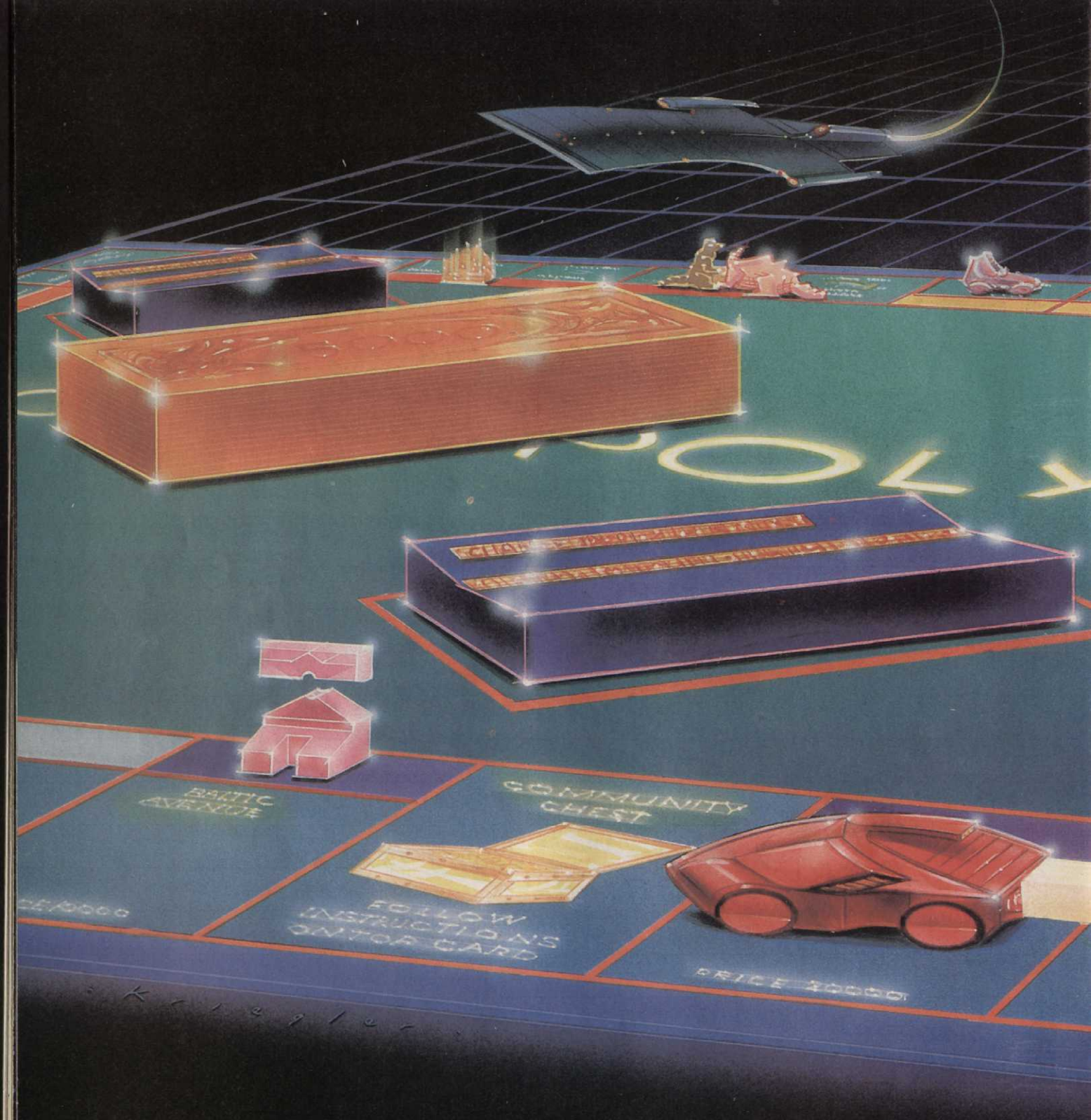

PARKER BROTHERS STRIKES BACK

By Steve Bloom

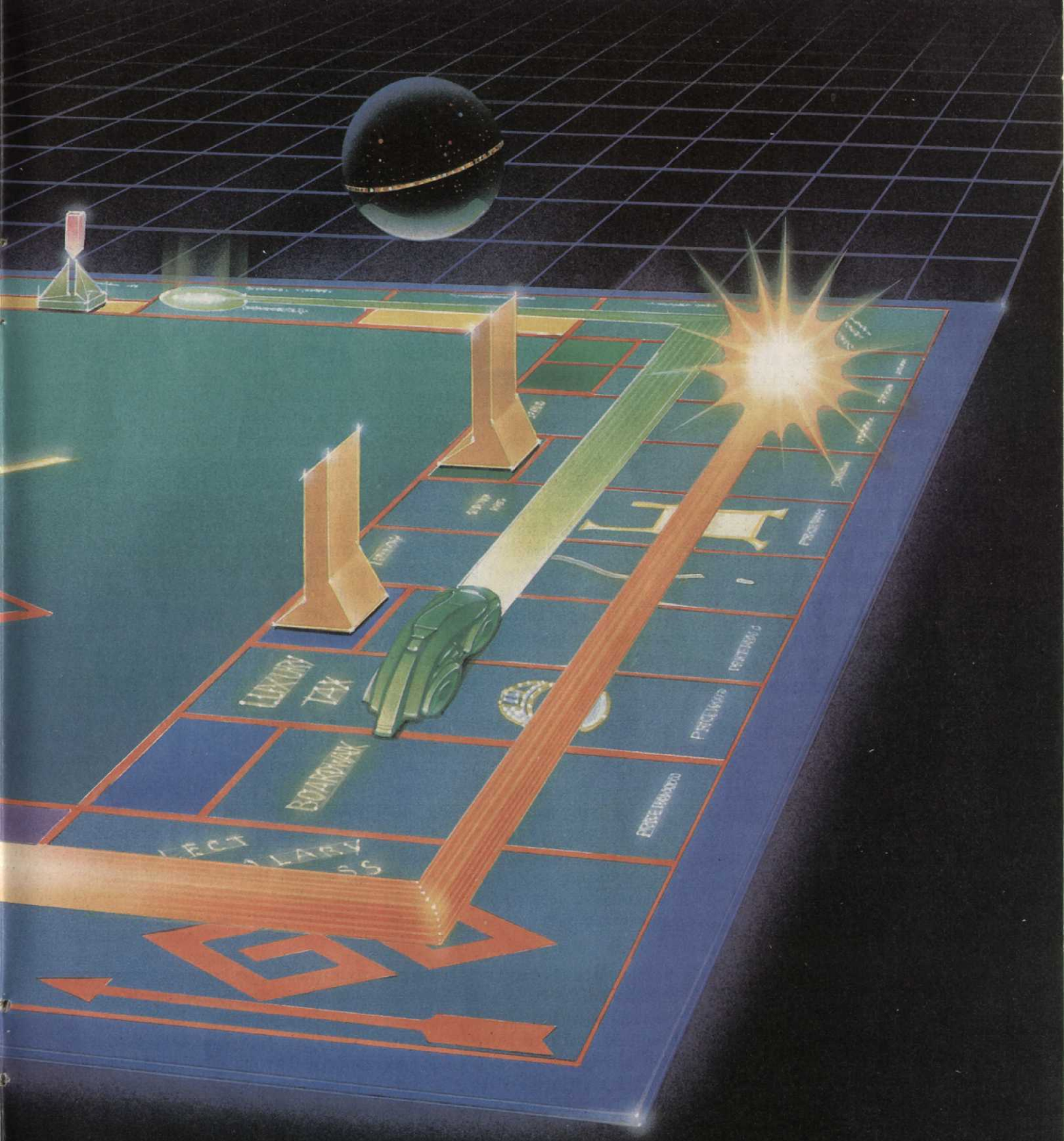

Illustration by Richard Krieger

Pass Go, Collect $200. I've always wondered what that *really* means. Maybe today I'll find out. Maybe somebody at Parker Brothers will know.

Random thoughts like this flash in and out of my head as I ride the last leg of my jaunt up to Beverly, Mass. I recall sitting around the dining room table with my family, totally absorbed in a wonderfully inventive, magical playing board and its game parts for hours. We liked Risk, Careers and, of course, Monopoly. Parker Brothers was responsible for each one.

For a games enthusiast like myself, visiting Parker Brothers' corporate headquarters is like a movie buff touring one of Hollywood's glamorous film studios. There would be history, memories, nostalgia bordering on schmaltz—all worth experienced for just one day. Parker Brothers was a part of my childhood, like yo-yos, Spalding rubber balls and Bullwinkle & Rocky. I wouldn't miss this visit for all the "Pass Go, Collect $200" cards in the world.

But I'm getting off-track. Video games are on people's minds, and Parker Brothers is flowing with the times. That's why, on my tour, I should really expect to hear hard-edged trade talk about Frogger and Amidar, rather than sweet reminiscences of Boardwalk and Park Place. A late entry in the software sweepstakes, Parker Brothers is busy playing catch-up.

Forty-five minutes after arriving in Boston I am deposited at Parker Brothers' doorstep. The building is a modern four-story structure, all reflected glass and tan brick with touches of red and white. The setting, a wooded estate removed just far enough from the Interstate, is lovely.

Anxious to get inside, I jog the short distance from the curb to the double-doors and pull back the red handle. I'm prepared for an assault of historical evidence of the company's rise to prominence—the first Monopoly board ever built, encased, like a museum piece, in glass; magazine covers, laminated, on the wall; painstaking portraits of the founder, George S. Parker, and his brothers Charles and Edward. Nothing. Just a staircase, a reception booth and the obligatory sofas and chairs. The only indications that I am, indeed, in Parker Brothers' lobby is a copy of *Toys & Games Merchandising* that's resting on an end table and a visitor's badge with the company's logo that I'm requested to sign. It turns out that Parker Brothers' archives is located in another building in Salem, Mass. So much for my historical tour.

I'm led to a conference room where I will meet Richard Stearns, Parkers' vice-president for consumer electronics. All I know about Rich Stearns is that he went to Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania, was once employed by Gillette, and joined Parker Brothers in 1977. Formerly a director of marketing—he handled the company's hand-helds, among other duties—Stearns is now exclusively involved with Parker's video game program.

Dressed in classic Brooks Brothers style, Stearns is in his early 30's and prematurely grey. After exchanging pleasantries, we seem to be at ease with each other. His lack of arrogance makes him immediately likeable and I *feel* a good interview is in the making.

Stearns is remarkably candid about the circumstances that brought Parker Brothers into the vido game business. "We had a very successful experience in hand-helds (electronic games)," he says, "but then the crash came. We didn't get hurt as badly as some of the other companies did, though we did have some inventory problems. I don't think anybody really anticipated that drastic market glut in hand-helds and so we just got a little sidetracked.

"We were so delirious over the hand-held category, that we believed the video game category was insignificant in comparison. Where the hand-helds were a billion-dollar business in '79, video games were lingering around $150 million. We weren't sure they were for real. And, frankly, we know we missed the video game thing by one year. We were definitely a year late."

In 1981, with hand-held electronic games at the point of no returns, Parker Brothers began seriously considering going video. President Randolph P. Barton assigned Stearns to investigate. Ignorant about the video game business, Stearns started making phone calls, the first to a "little information service in New York. I told them that I wanted to learn something about the arcade industry, what do I do? They said there are trade magazines called *Play Meter* and *Replay*. I said, 'Fine, send me copies of last year's issues.' I read them all, familiarizing myself with the names of all the

Conquering the World, Computer-Style

Photo by Alan Arpadi

Risk, a board game that allows you to conquer the world, enjoys a fanatical cult following. It is rumored that Hugh Hefner, Steven Spielberg, and even Ronald Reagan are heavy Risk players. In any case, it generally attracts highly competitive achievers.

Ron Wright plays Risk several times a week. A programmer with Software Exchange, a firm that designs software packages for Wall Street specialists, Wright has created a home video version of Risk on an IBM personal computer.

A typical game of Risk involves three to six people. Each player selects territories by placing armies on a map of the world, then attacks his neighbors. Wars are waged by throwing dice. Each successful attack wins a card, which can be exchanged for new armies at the beginning of a turn. The first set of cards is worth four armies, the second is worth six. The next sets of cards are worth eight, 10, 12, 15, 20, 25, 30, and so on. The game ends when one player takes over every country in the world.

Wright's computer Risk plays just like the board game, just without the board. Except for the cards, all you need is a computer and a TV. The screen lists the countries (in text) and the computer rolls the dice. Players are required to push buttons on the computer to complete all moves. Ron even programmed in some attack music.

Another interesting feature is statistics a player can consult on the screen, such as offensive and defensive success rates, and the up-to-the-minute attack strength of each player, before or during an attack. Explains Wright: "You can also save a game and review it at the end." But he sees room for improvement. "A monitor for a better picture, a joystick to select territories, and possibly a voice synthesizer to do away with the cards—there are plenty of ways I could make it better," Wright says.

Computer Risk is cerebral and subdued, more like group chess than the typically loud and active board Risk game the cultists know and love. It's like playing the idea of Risk rather than actually playing Risk.

Since Risk is a 19th century war game, Wright and his friends have been discussing plans for a Risk game based on nuclear technology. Now that's a game that would end with a big bang, huh?

—John Holmstrom

companies, and I picked up the phone and started calling them.

"From a directory I could see that Pete Kaufman was the president of Exidy. So I called Exidy and said, 'Is Pete Kaufman there? I'm Rich Stearns from Parker Brothers, and I want to talk to him about licensing.' That's how I met all the top guys. Then I started going out on the road to meet them personally, two, three and four times. I just tried to represent Parker Brothers—tell them what we were doing and why we could do a great job for them.

"We were like the 'Jimmy Who' (Carter) phenomenon, you know. Parker Brothers knew nothing about the business a year ago, and we had no video games."

But Parker Brothers had an ace in the hole. Its sister company, Kenner Products (both owned by General Mills) had signed a contract with Lucasfilm in 1977 that gave General Mills' Toy Group exclusive worldwide rights to toys and games based on the *Star Wars* series. Admits Stearns: "The only thing we had to do was a real good convincing job to Lucas (Lucasfilm) that we could represent them well in the home video area, because I think they were ready to try to get out from that contractual arrangement one way or the other."

Last February, accompanied by a fair amount of hype, Parker Brothers released its maiden video game cartridge, The Empire Strikes Back. Of all the scenes in both movies, Parker decided to duplicate the Ice Planet Hoth battle. Why? "Because, in my opinion," Stearns explains, "that's one of the 10 most exciting moments in cinema history. We also felt that it had the right elements to make a good game—the heavy, sluggish, clumsy guy against the quick, agile and manueverable guy. You know, the old David and Goliath routine."

Stearns is confident the average video game consumer—a 14-year-old male, according to his data—will pick a *Star Wars* game over the competition's shoot-'em-ups. "There's Space Blaster, Space Honker, the Attack of the Space Mutants—every kind of space target practice imaginable—and then there's *Star Wars*. Now which one is he going to pull off the shelf?" Stearns asks rhetorically. "*Star Wars*, of course, because it's the best movie he's ever seen. He reads the comic books, loves George Lucas

The First 100 Years

1867 George S. Parker is born.

1882 Bored with chess, checkers and dominoes, George makes up his own game, called *Banking*. It's a card game in which the wealthiest player at the end wins. He publishes 500 sets with his own money and sells it throughout New England.

1883 With the $100 he earns from Banking, he establishes the George S. Parker Company in Salem, Mass.

1888 George's oilman brother, Charles, joins the company. It is renamed Parker Brothers.

1906 *Rook*, Parker's most popular card game ever, is published. It will go on to sell more than 55 million decks.

1920 Parker creates a new national pasttime—the jigsaw puzzle.

1935 Depression or not, *Monopoly* arrives. Brought to the company by Charles Darrow, it is rejected at first. Supposedly the rules are too complicated and the game is marred by countless fundamental playing errors. Darrow returns to Philadelphia and begins producing it by himself. But he's unable to keep up with the demand and asks Parker Brothers to reconsider. They do. The rest is histr'y.

1953 George Parker passes away at age 86.

1956 Parker reaches agreement with a British firm to manufacture and distribute the board game *Clue* in the States. Whodunit? John Waddington Ltd, of course.

1957 Opportunity knocks on Parker's door in the form of a board game named *Careers*. Credit Dr. James C. Brown, a professor at the University of Florida.

1959 Parker's partner in Paris, the Miro Company, comes up with an unusual board game theme: world conquest. Parker decides to take a *Risk*.

1968 Parker Brothers is gobbled by General Mills Inc.

1970 In a departure from its catalog of heady board games, Parker presents *Nerf Ball*. Hailed as the world's first indoor ball, it is followed by an assortment of Nerf products, including a football that currently outsells every other leather and rubber model on the market.

1977 You never needed batteries to operate any of Parker's products before *Code Name: Sector* came along. Such is life in the brave new world of electronic games.

1980 *Merlin* becomes Parker's top-selling hand-held of all time.

1982 You never needed a TV and AC to play any of Parker Brothers' games before *The Empire Strikes Back*, a video game cartridge based on the movie, came along. *Frogger* follows close behind as Parker makes its move in the TV-game derby.

1982 Is nothing sacred? Apparently not. For the first time in Monopoly's glorious 47-year history an accessory is introduced. The electronic *Playmaster* does everything but turn out the lights when the game's over.

—*S.B.*

ATARI® INTRODUCES

A video game series so challenging, you could win up to $150,000 in prizes for solving it.

Atari's new SwordQuest takes you on a journey through four separate worlds—actually four separate video game cartridges—in search of a jeweled sword. The Sword of Ultimate Sorcery.

But along the way, you could actually win four different $25,000 jewel-encrusted treasures (one for solving each game) and even the ultimate treasure: a $50,000 jeweled sword in the Atari $150,000 SwordQuest challenge (see game rules for details).

To help you solve each game, you'll find a SwordQuest DC-Comicbook enclosed with each cartridge. It contains the detailed story of that SwordQuest game along with the clues you'll need to master its mysteries.

In fact, if you can solve any one of SwordQuest's four separate video games, you'll be considered

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SWORDQUEST™

an expert player. And you'll be rewarded for it.

Just send us the form enclosed with each game cartridge (EarthWorld™ entry must be submitted by March 15, 1983), fill in the appropriate clues and we'll rate your performance for that game. If you've solved enough clues you'll receive an official Atari SwordQuest Challenge Certificate of Merit.

EarthWorld, the first SwordQuest cartridge, is here now. FireWorld™ is coming soon. WaterWorld™ and AirWorld™ will be out by Fall, 1983.

So start solving new Atari SwordQuest now.

The sooner you start, the sooner you'll get to the bottom of it.

ATARI

A Warner Communications Company

and everything he does. He'll have to see what this video game is all about."

Meanwhile, Stearns practically took up residence in Japan, where many of the arcade games originally come from. He's been there eight times since Parker's Project Video began, and thinks he has learned what the Japanese are looking for in an American partner. "Honor, honesty and forthrightness, those are the keys," says Stearns, "and someone who likes to drink a lot of tea."

Just the name Parker Brothers is likely to inspire trust. And let's just say that General Mills inspires sitting down at the negotiating table. Crows Stearns: "We have as much money behind us as Atari. We're an honest company with a lot going for us. We're not here today and gone tomorrow, and on that basis they (the Japanese) have started more and more to trust us and sign agreements with us."

Stearns' first agreement was with Konami, a company he describes as having a "pretty good record." The deal was for Frogger, Amidar, Super Cobra and Tutankham. "We're willing to take a risk on Konami," Stearns explains, "because we think that one time out of three they're going to have a super hit." But weren't all those games hits *before* Parker bought them? "We've bought a number of games up front, some of which have been very successful, some of which have been less successful," he replies. "That's the name of the game today."

One of the games that fits into the latter category is Reactor, Parker's only American arcade license. Another is Sky Skipper, Nintendo's inauspicious offering after Donkey Kong. "We took Sky Skipper on the hope that it would be as big as Donkey Kong," Stearns concedes. "As it turned out, they decided to not even produce Sky Skipper in the States." But Parker has decided to go ahead with the cartridge anyway. "What we're saying to Nintendo is that we really want to do business with you on your *next* game."

Be it an arcade game or some other pop culture icon or craze, you can bet Parker Brothers will be there. Back in 1888, Mark Twain's novel, *Innocence Abroad*, was attracting a good deal of publicity, so they based a game on it. When the nation's military spirit was on the upswing a few years later, they released War in Cuba, The Siege of Havana and Battle of Manila. In the roaring '20s, Parker Brothers came on strong, largely the result of its Mah-Jongg game. Even then, the company was shrewd enough to secure the rights to that ever popular Oriental tile game.

So I'm not surprised when Stearns tells me that Parker Brothers will also be creating video games tied to the Strawberry Shortcake characters, Spiderman, GI Joe, the Incredible Hulk, *The Lord of the Rings* series and the forever immortal 007. "We generally look for licenses which have long-term franchises," he says. "James Bond has been around since 1962 and he's always been popular with teenage boys. Whenever a new movie comes out it's a box-office success. We feel it's the kind of thing that would lend itself to video games—you know, espionage, chasing, battles, the good guy gets the bad guys. I don't think it's the strongest license we have, but if we can put a good game behind it we'll be in good shape.

"Parker Brothers knew nothing about the business a year ago. We're like the 'Jimmy Who' phenomenon, you know."

"Right now," Stearns adds, "we're busy getting our licenses out because we think that initially that's the best way to buy our way into the market."

In other words, don't expect to see any original, non-licensed games coming from Parker Brothers for awhile. "This month," he says, "a kid can go out and buy Donkey Kong, Berzerk, Frogger, The Empire Strikes Back and Defender. Is he really going to buy Lost Luggage, Shark Attack and Space Spartans? I think in 1982 those companies will have some success, but beyond that I don't know. There's going to be 300 to 400 games out there next year. To get that kid's fair consideration, we think you need a good strong license."

Between now and June, expect about eight cartridges from Parker Brothers. Amidar and Spiderman, a climbing game with some neat tricks, should be in the stores already; Super Cobra and a second *Star Wars* game called Jedi Arena, which is based on the jousting scene in the original movie, are scheduled for January; Sky Skipper, Tutankham, Reactor and the Strawberry Shortcake game, which is being specifically geared toward the "little sisters who aren't into Demon Attack" and is moderately educational, should be out by April; and The Revenge of the Jedi cartridge will appear shortly after the film's May release.

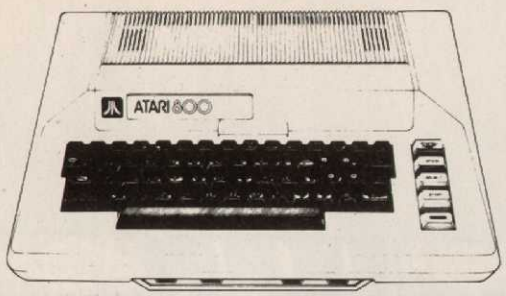
Intellivision owners, currently unable to take advantage of Parker Brothers' products, will be happy to hear that Frogger, The Empire Strikes Back, Jedi Arena and Super Cobra cartridges are all being readied for a spring shipment. Explains Stearns: "The best titles from our VCS-compatible line will be made for Intellivision by the end of next year. Beyond that, we're looking forward to designing products for the more sophisticated systems. The better the system, the better products we can put out."

Stearns isn't only talking about ColecoVision and Atari's new 5200, but home computers as well. "In 1983, our objective is to have our first games for personal computer systems on the market. It's a go program. We have the market area staffed and people working on it. It's just a question of which system we're going to commit our resources to."

Having touched most of the essential bases, the conversation begins to wind down. It's time to find out whether Rich Stearns, family man and corporate executive, is a gamer, too. "I love the games!" he explodes, as if wondering what took me so long to ask. "I really love to play them. Hey, man, if you don't play them, you shouldn't be in the business. You have to have a little bit of a 15-year-old kid in you if you're going to be making these kinds of decisions."

Super Cobra is his favorite of all of Parker's licenses, but Stearns really leans towards Asteroids, Centipede and Turbo. "Randy Barton once told me, 'Rich, if ever see a weekly expense report of yours that doesn't have at least $10 for arcade games on it, you're fired."

As of this writing, Rich Stearns was still at Parker Brothers. And I still don't know what "Pass Go, Collect $200" really means. ▲



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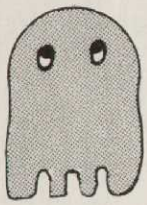

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16K.... $269
32K.... $349
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Most software for Atari 400/800 available on cassette or disk.

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CONFESSIONS OF A PINBALL JUNKIE

A whole generation of flipper fiends and thumper bumpers are still smarting over video's takeover. The author of 'Pinball' is one of them.

By Roger C. Sharpe

There's a definite sense of getting older, at least for me, when the little things begin to change. The shampoo I've used for years suddenly disappears from the supermarket shelves. A trusty slide rule, never mastered (or for that matter really understood) during my school days, becomes a relic, pushed aside by a pocket calculator. Don't get me wrong: I have no qualms about progress. In fact, these changes, and many others, have often been accompanied by a certain sense of relief. But the decline of my favorite form of entertainment—pinball—is different. A different story entirely.

After eight years of staunchly supporting pinball as a writer and advocate, I now see myself as a victim of the times. With video games firmly entrenched as the pre-eminent arcade game, I can no longer ignore their presence. And now, like everyone else, when a new model is introduced, I dutifully take my place in line to try out the latest thing called state of the art.

But I'm not ready to pack up my flipper fingers and call it a day. Having gained entry into the inner sanctum of the game's unique fantasy world, having traveled thousands of miles to explore its special mysteries, and having authored a book and more than 200 articles about its pleasures and conceits, I cannot walk away. Not yet.

* * *

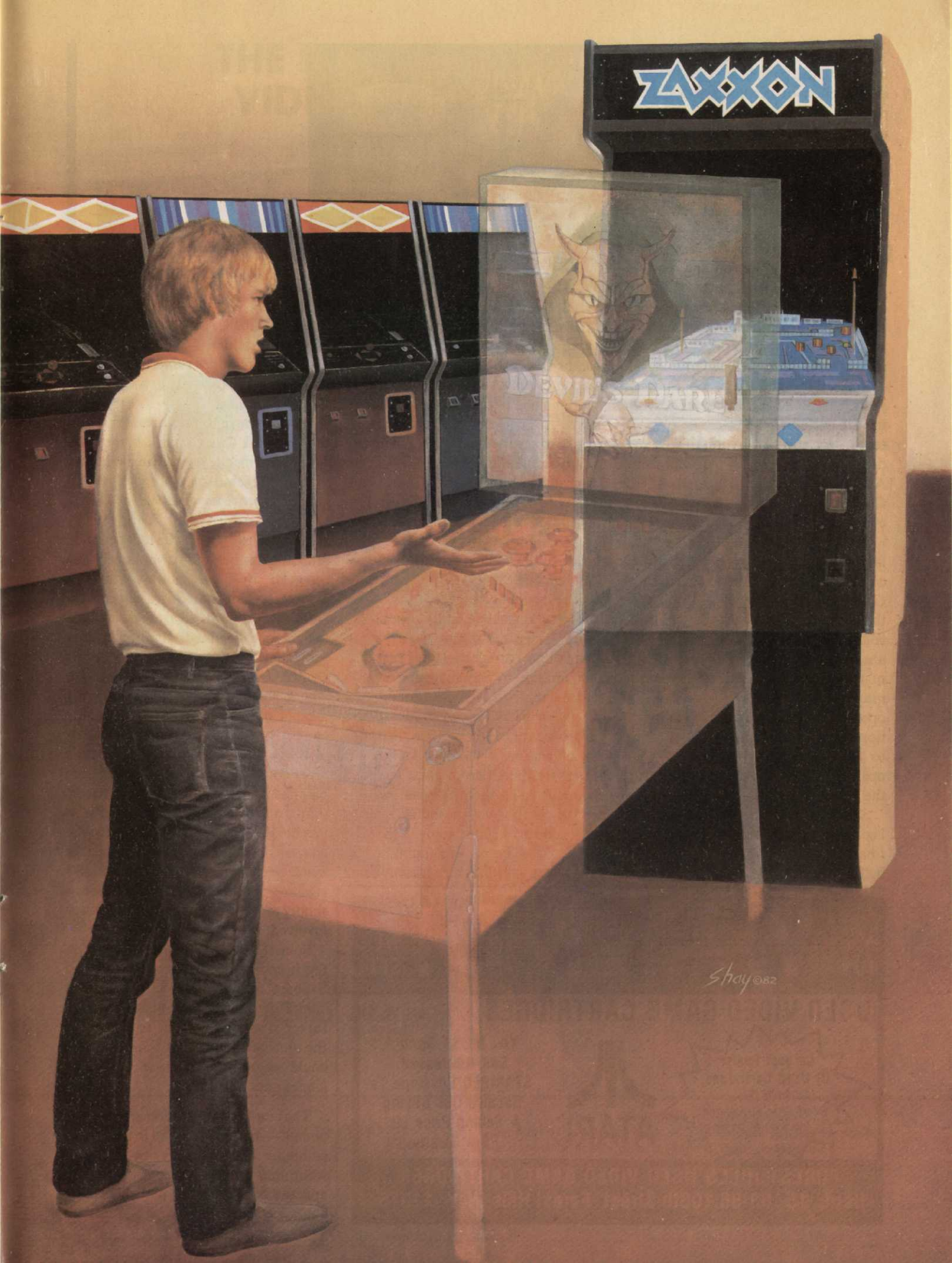
It's ironic that my life became so intertwined with pinball. For most of my youth, pinball didn't exist. Even though Chicago, where I grew up, is the hub for flipper manufacturers, the games were banned until well after I had gone off to college, and my obsession with them had begun.

As if to make up for lost time, I majored in pinball at the University of Wisconsin. The games were everywhere—in campus bars, hangouts, even in the student union—making gaudy spectacles of themselves. I found myself drawn to their three-dimensional landscapes of thumper-bumpers, drop targets, spinners, kick-out holes, slingshot kickers and flippers, and especially the din they created. Intimidated, but compelled, I took a step closer. What did the component parts mean, I wondered? What was the purpose of playing? How was I to begin the learning process when no two models looked the same?

I remember being afraid of trying to accomplish the unknown, though probably more of appearing foolish—worse, inept — before my new-found friends. At the onset, I did not fare well. Once I pulled back the plunger and sent the ball on its merry way I furiously tapped the flipper buttons on the side of the cabinet simultaneously. The ball, of course, was nowhere near my flippers. I was over-anxious, a lost cause, a stranger in a strange land.

But, somehow, despite this unsettling initiation, I was having fun...and getting better. I learned that each game had its own peculiar challenge and reward, such as Gottlieb's Subway with its sliding doors on the backglass which opened and closed when a 100-point mark was reached, and Cow Poke with its bucking broncos that gave you the ride of a lifetime. And, more important, I found an escape from the rigors of the real world. Pinball provided a release from the pressures of exams, a way to forget the horror of a Southeast Asian war thousands of miles away. Increasingly I turned to pinball and the unique attraction it offered.

Oftentimes I would stand at the side of a machine and watch the resident aces nonchalantly ring up astounding point totals. I recall one in particular, his name long since forgotten, who each day would park his body on a stool in front of Cow Poke at the local Burgerville. Devouring burgers, fries and Cokes, smoking his Marlboros, he would play one continuous game during the afternoon repast—one game with one dime...and scores that were totally beyond my comprehension.


ZAXXON
DEVIL'S DARE
Shay ©82

It was a performance that mesmerized me daily. And so I perservered, hooked on the quest of becoming the kind of player I would watch with awe, caught up in the personal challenge of proving that no machine could beat me, and knowing that higher scores lay ahead if only I could decipher the codes of that strange, elusive world under glass.

Photo by James Hamilton

"I learned that each game had its own peculiar challenge and reward. And, more important, I found an escape from the real world."

Then, suddenly, the games were gone—a joyful era packed away with textbooks and diploma. Transformed into a wage-earning member of the real world, I found myself in New York City, where, in the early '70s, pinball was illegal.

I missed the damned games. For four years, they had been an integral part of my life and now, they were beyond my reach. Not able to play in the arcade, I dreamt of owning my own pinball game. And I knew which one I wanted: A 1965 Gottlieb Cow Poke, the only game I had ever really mastered.

This desire, seething beneath the surface of my day-to-day existence, sparked an idea. In 1975, I was an editor at *Gentlemen's Quarterly* and I suggested that we do a story on pinball. The other editors went for it, and I got the go-ahead to write a piece for the special end-of-the-year issue. I began calling manufacturers, distributors and operators, hungrily gathering information about pinball's illustrious journey to the forefront of American coin-operated amusement. The more I dug, the further my interest deepened.

Shortly after the article was published I convinced a publisher (E.P. Dutton) to finance the research and writing of a pinball book. I left *GQ*, and with James Hamilton, a photographer, commenced an expedition that would last for nine months and take us across Europe and this country in an attempt to capture all that remained of the pinball heritage.

It was not your average tour of Europe to say the least. Flying from city to city, our modus operandi was to grab a taxi at the airport and ask to be dropped off in the central district, the likeliest spot to find foreign pinball games in action. In London, we visited the game rooms of Piccadilly and the pubs of Clapham Common; in Paris, we blazed a path through the Pigalle.

In a cozy arcade in Barcelona we found something different—a pinball cabinet that had its back legs raised so high you had to play the game on a 45 degree slant. Not even the most intrepid of foreign pinball wizards—us—could make heads or tails of this new, lightning fast dimension in pinball. Back in the States, we toured from coast to coast, ending up in northern Wisconsin in the dead of winter. Only the indulgence of a book contract kept us going.

After the book was published, I gained a reputation as an authority on all facets of pinball. And, as pinball tried to break the shackles of its seedy reputation and take on a more respectable aura, I was even asked to testify at a number of legal proceedings.

It was bizarre to find myself in front of New York City Council, in the glare of the local media, trying to explain why pinball, a game of skill, deserved a chance to prove its worth again. Thirty-five years earlier, New York's feisty Mayor Fiorello Laguardia had banished pinball in his beloved town, largely due to guilt by association with slot machines. Pinball was just a game, I said —fun for people of all ages and cultures and innocent enough for public consumption. To prove it wasn't a game of chance, as some still believed, I agreed to demonstrate Gottlieb's Bank Shot. As I racked up points in a three-minute game, I detailed the intricacies of plungers, kick-holes, and the board's other components, explaining that each part had its own specific purpose. At one point, one of the city fathers—perhaps prodded by a dim childhood memory—claimed I had cheated in a particular maneuver. No, I replied, it wasn't cheating. Manipulating the machine was simply an example of the skill that was involved.

Something must have gone right: A few months later, the Council rescinded the ban. Although pinball would never completely escape its image as a corrupter of youth and a profit machine for the underworld, at least Manhattanites could enjoy the pleasures of flipper games once again.

* * *

The late '70s proved a renaissance for pinball—its day in the sun in the microcomputer era. Suddenly, by whatever whim that arouses public taste and the appetite of the media, pinball became chic. Perhaps The Who's "Pinball

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Wizard"—which earlier in the decade had seemed to be on the lips of every teenager in America—had helped to create an ideal, and a new generation of players braced itself to take on the awesome, microprocessor-based Solid State designs that started to flood the arcades.

The *Wall Street Journal* wrote: "It's hard not to notice that the pinball machine is making a comeback." *Time* magazine celebrated pinball on its cover. Tom Synder did a show about it. And I rode the wave. I did a book tour, *The Today Show, Good Morning America.*

Even though video games had quietly begun to infiltrate the arcades, Cinematronic's Sundance video, for example, was no match for Bally's Eight Ball pinball. Or was it? In comparison to pinball's physicality, video seemed almost passive, like golf. Wasn't most of the fun in pinball working up a mean sweat? Video was too cool for that to happen. (I did, I must admit, occasionally pop a quarter or two in Breakout at the time.)

It's remarkable how subtle the transformation from pinball to video was. Everyday, I used to meet with a couple of cronies at the Broadway Arcade on New York's 52nd Street to play the newest flipper games. Slowly but surely, as video started getting away from head-to-head competition (Sprint 2, etc.) and more towards solo games versus the machine, we watched the kids drift away from pinball. It was us "golden oldies," who remained faithful to the cause. And we knew we were diminishing in number. Even our trio began drifting apart. Lionel started to play video in between bouts with the pinball. Steve, the arcade's owner, was more or less required to sample the new videos. Predictably, I stood strongly by the flipper games, knowing they would bounce back.

"I'm not ready to pack up my pinball fingers and call it a day. Not yet."

But, then came Space Invaders, and a torrent of publicity, trumpeted loud and hard. Suddenly, video games were a phenomenon. Like another recent phenomenon—*Star Wars*—video games allowed players to fly in space and perform intergalactic miracles, transported us all to another place and time where pinball definitely didn't belong.

As the front panels of video game cabinets continued to expand in complexity, I was getting steadily left behind. Like a decade earlier, I watched in amazement the effortlessness of the resident Asteroids aces. The difference being: I had no desire to mimic them like I did the campus pinball wizard. There was, I decided, a limit to what I would endure for the sake of entertainment.

I resented having to go back to "school" and learn a whole new set of rules. Especially when the effort I had to expend never seemed to be in proportion to the rewards. While pinball playfield designs were dramatically changing, my only need was still to press those flipper buttons when the ball was within reach and work out the strategies as I went along. Pinball was familiar.

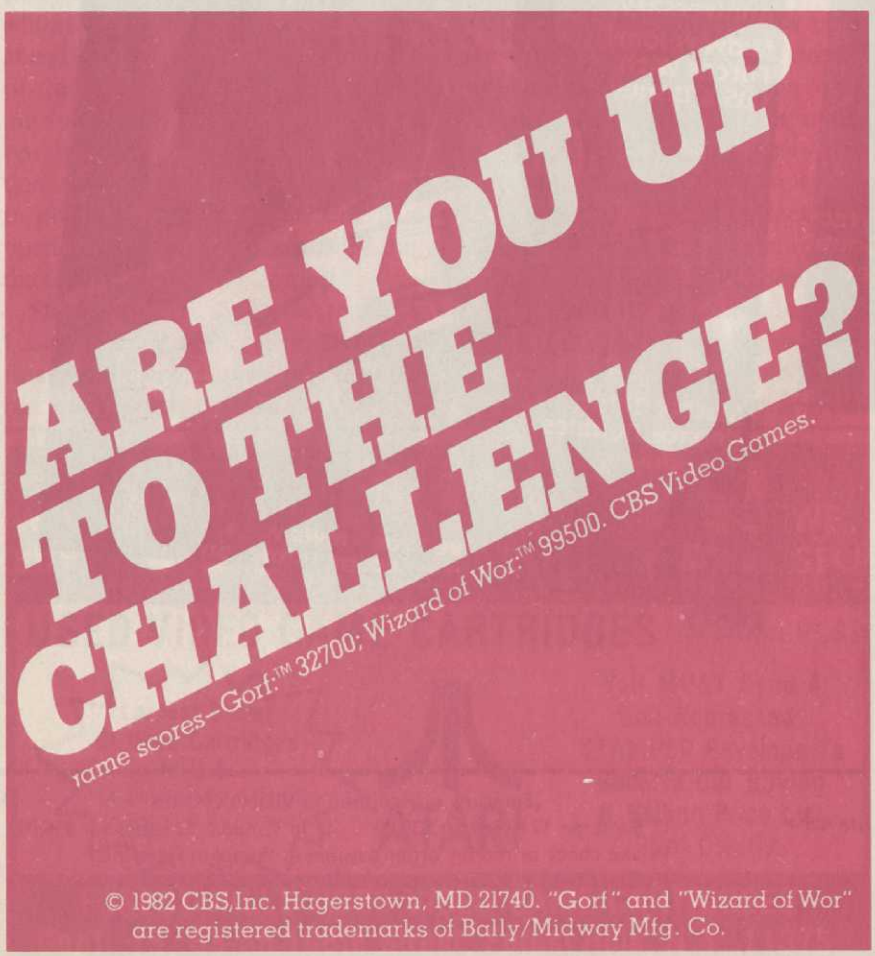
* * *

I often wonder why pinball had become such a driving force in my life. I'm really just another player and ardent follower who became obsessed with playing. But there's got to be more to it than that, something imbedded deep in the recesses of a "tilted" mind that makes me go onward and not let pinball fade into the hereafter without something more than the whimper I uttered for that discontinued shampoo or trusty slide rule. I guess that's why, even though so many believe that pinball's fate has been sealed, I recently flew to Chicago to work on a pinball game design for one of the remaining companies dedicated to the art.

I will relunctantly fill the prescriptions my various editors have requested: Is SubRoc 3-D all it's cranked up to be? Has Donkey Kong Jr. done his daddy proud? Will Gravitar send you into another dimension of sight and sound?

I've decided to be practical at last. No longer can I cling to the hope that reports of pinball's demise, like Mark Twain's, are greatly exaggerated. ▲

Roger Sharpe is not related to Jerzy Kozinski.



BOOK BEAT

Rating the Latest Video Game Books

By Phil Wiswell

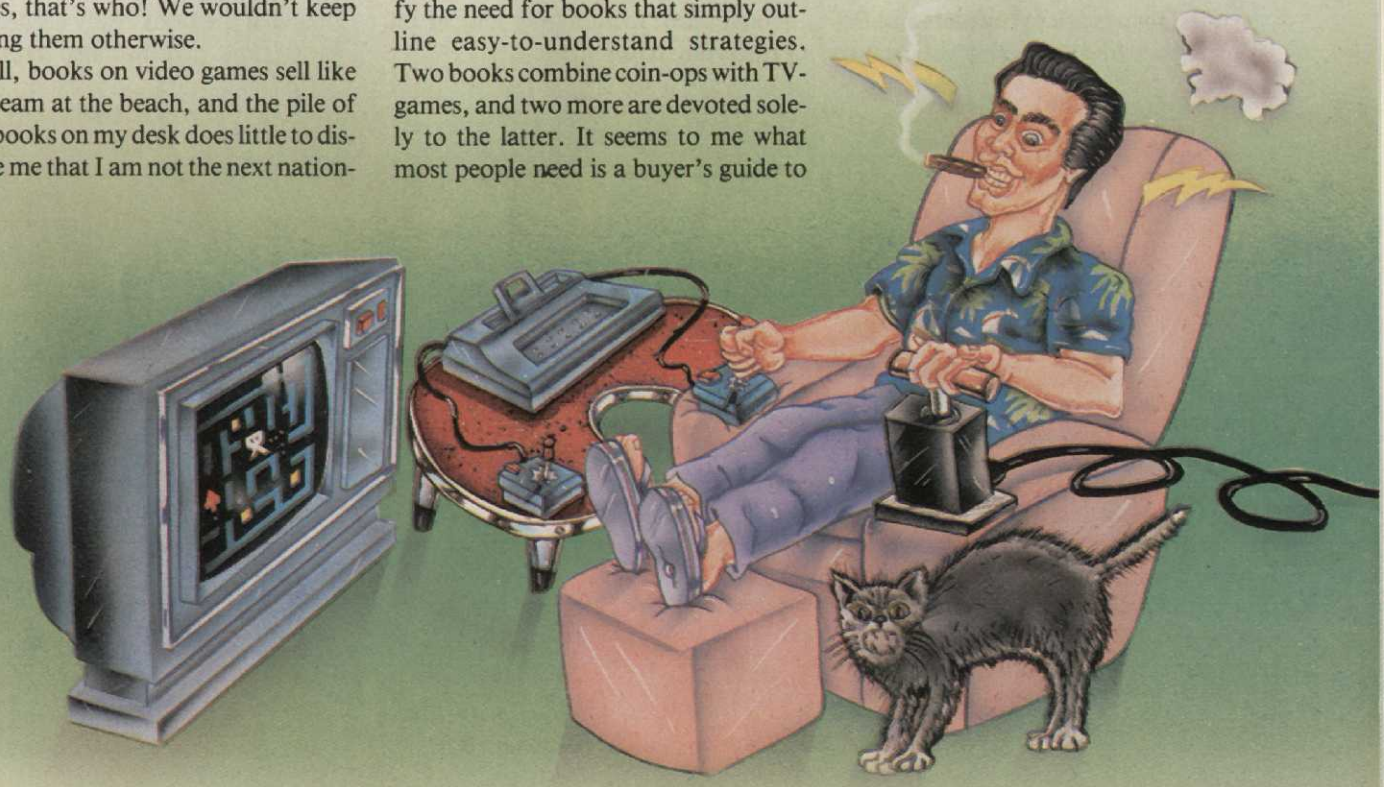
The boasts on the covers of most video game books are like the carnival barker's classic pitch: "Step right up, kid, step right up. How'd ja like to be the next winner? That's right, I said *winner*! There's nothing to it, kid." Win, master, beat, conquer— one even promises to instruct you how to "Break a Million at Pac-Man."

Since we know from experience that the milk bottles are weighted, the rings bounce off the pegs, the spinning wheel is rigged for low-payoff numbers, then why are we willing to believe we can win every video game ever made by reading a single paperback book? Who wins every game of Pac-Man, Asteroids, or Space Invaders? The machines, that's who! We wouldn't keep playing them otherwise.

Still, books on video games sell like ice cream at the beach, and the pile of new books on my desk does little to dissuade me that I am not the next national champion at whatever video game I'd like. I've read them all, tried their strategies, and yet I've never won the fluffy bear. In a way, I feel like Diogenes after his search for an honest man. Sure, some of my scores at the home games have improved and my quarters last a bit longer at the arcade, but I have not become a superstar. I've yet to even draw as much as a small crowd.

Six of the 14 books that will be discussed here are restricted to coin-op games only, and though some include a short chapter on TV-games, you wouldn't buy any of these books for that reason. Coin-op games alone, with their incredibly skimpy (not to mention often misleading) rules, justify the need for books that simply outline easy-to-understand strategies. Two books combine coin-ops with TV-games, and two more are devoted solely to the latter. It seems to me what most people need is a buyer's guide to TV-games rather than a strategy guide, since the systems do have reset buttons and cartridges are less expensive to explore than the infamous coin-op quarter-eaters. These 10 books range in price from $1.95 to $5.95, in thickness from 79 pages to 675 pages, and in usefulness from one to eight on a scale of 10.

Of the coin-op books covering more than a single game, **Secrets of the Video Game Superstars** (Avon/$2.50) by Len Albin is the most impressive (Usefulness: 7). It covers strategies for 26 current games, all developed and used by video gamers who shoot astronomical scores on their individual games. This is a big plus. It relieves



Albin from the awesome task of personally advising strategies and leaves it up to the expert gamers, which is the way it should be.

David Lubar and Owen Linzmayer's **Guide to the Video Arcade Games** (Creative Computing Press/$3.95) not only contains chapters on six fewer games than Albin's book, but each game gets a shorter treatment. "Whenever possible, eat the prizes that appear near the center," we are informed in the Pac-Man chapter. *"This is the real key to high scores."* I expected to be told how to do all the prize-eating. Nope. I looked for some note on when prizes appear, or when not to go for them. Nothing. The cover mentions "Tips For Beginners and Pros." That tip must have been for the beginners. Usefulness: 5.

Still, Lubar and Linzmayer's book must be called comprehensive compared to **How To Win At Video Games** (Scholastic Book Services/$1.95) by George Sullivan. The introduction, which includes sections titled "Become an Observer," "Read the Game Instructions," "Concentrate," "Develop Quick Hands," "Be Confident," and the one that made me the most nervous, "Practice, Practice, Practice" (which really means "Quarters, Quarter, Quarters") is absolutely agonizing. Don't tell me to be confident; tell me where the mothership is. Of the 16 games, there's Space Invaders and Deluxe Space Invaders, each with its own chapter, as if they were still pertinent games. They have disappeared from my arcade. Even worse, the strategy given is so general as to be of no use. Sullivan seems to me a person who either shoots mediocre scores or doesn't want to share his secrets. Usefulness: 1.

The books dedicated to single games tend to be the most useful, particularly for those hooked on a particular game. Bantam has begun such a series. **The Video Master's Guide to Pac-Man** ($1.95) by Jim Sykora and John Birkner is not as entertaining as Ken Uston's now-classic *Mastering Pac-Man*, but it does provide even more patterns, diagrams and information. For anyone choosing between the two, I'd suggest Uston's to the player who dreams of scoring 100,000 points and the Bantam book to someone who will never be satisfied until he breaks a million. (Isn't that the name of another book?) Usefulness: 8.

The Video Master's Guide To Centipede ($1.95) by Ron Dubren contains even more information and diagrams to be memorized than the Pac-Man book. Actually, there is too much to absorb here. There are chapters for beginners, intermediates, advanced players, experts and, finally, one for fanatics only. Which are you? So many different strategies are discussed that the reader may end up confusing them—shooting mushrooms when he should leave them alone, and so on. Frustrating. Usefulness: 6.

Conversely, Nick Broomis's **The Video Master's Guide to Defender** ($1.95) is more of a "Video Beginner's Guide To Defender". Since Defender is one of the most complicated games in the history of video, this book shouldn't be the slimmest book in the series, yet it is. And most of the 79 pages are filled with diagrams, leaving the player with little to read. Two pages and four diagrams just to say that "Mutants can zigzag across the screen and encircle you with their bombs." ? I object! There's little here that you wouldn't learn by spending the two bucks playing Defender. Usefulness: 2.

Now, the point of **The Video Wizard's Handbook** (The Video Wizard Company, San Francisco, Ca./$5.95) by Keith and Kevin Sobie is to turn you into a vid-whiz, the definition of which remains vague. ("Just what is all this talk about a Video Wizard attitude? Well, there is nothing concrete really," they write.) The book only covers three TV-games (Space Invaders, Asteroids, and Missile Command—who plays these anymore?) and six coin-ops, and is marred by typographical and printing errors (for example, pages 50 and 56 are identical). The Sobies' section on coin-op games—from Space Invaders to Tempest—brightens up this amateurish, self-published effort. Though some diagrams could have been more complete, the meat is there to improve your scores measurably. But what this book really needed was a

(Continued on page 82)

Illustration by Dana Ventura

GAMER FEEDBACK

RIP IT OUT, or photocopy it. But let us know what you want to see and read. This is your magazine, Video Gamer, and you can be a part of VIDEO GAMES by taking a few minutes (when you're not saving the earth from total annihilation) to fill out the questionnaire below. The next issue of VIDEO GAMES will continue to report the Video Gaming news and views that interest you.

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The same____ Better____ The Best!____ No comment____
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GAMER SECTION

Favorite form of play: Arcade games____ TV-games____ Computer games____

Favorite arcade games	Favorite cartridges	Favorite computer games
1 _____	1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____	3 _____

Finally, we come to that time again when all good gamers must speak their minds. What Great Ideas and Concepts do you have for New Games? _____
_____
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Put Words in Our Mouths!
That's what this fun-loving couple seem to be saying. So, why not? We'll be giving away 10—count 'em—10 Duncan yo-yos (five each of Pac-Man and Tron) to the 10 wittiest, wildest captions that *VIDEO GAMES'* readers come up with. To be eligible, your caption must be readable, arrive in our offices by December 15 and send at least one member of our staff into near-hysteria.

Answer: _____
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For Gamer Feedback Results #3, see page 82.

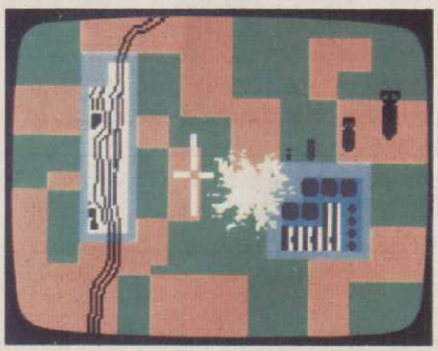
SOFT SPOT

A Few of Ken Uston's Favorite Games

The following article is condensed from Ken Uston's Home Video '83—The 20 Best New Games and How to Beat Them. . . Plus 5 Great Classics. *By Ken Uston, © 1982. Reprinted by permission of the New American Library.*

B-17 Bomber (Mattel)

Mattel has out-Intellivisioned Intellivision with B-17 Bomber, which is more like a simulated wartime mission than a game per se. It's about as close to actually flying on a bomber raid as I think it's possible to get on a TV-game system (a dangerous statement in this era of electronic technology, but I'll stick with it).



B-17 Bomber has a variety of views that simulate, with brilliant realism, what would be seen by the crew of a bomber. You even hear the background whir of the engine and the burst of enemy flak, and the screen shakes and rattles when the plane is hit. Finally, the piece de resistance: You don't feel alone on this mission, because actual voices (thanks to Intellivoice) help guide you through—congratulating you when you hit targets and screaming "May Day" when things really get rough.

You score points by hitting enemy fighters (called "Bandits" by your crew) and bombing targets, which have various point values. You lose points if your bomber is hit by enemy fire, or if for some reason you do a Benedict Arnold number and try to bomb England (your home base).

During the first several games, you'll be confused by the voices yelling things like "Bandit six o'clock ," as you attempt to evade enemy fighters and bomb targets at the same time. That's normal. It takes several games to get used to the controls. Gradually, you'll find yourself hitting buttons by reflex. When you get to that point, most of the learning process is behind you. By the time you successfully complete level six, you're definitely Strategic Air Command material.

Cosmic Avenger (Coleco/ColecoVision)

If I had to pick one TV-game that was the most fun to play and addictive, it would be Cosmic Avenger. The theme of the game, combined with the bright varied colors, the numerous moving objects and the sound effects, make it about the most impressive of any TV-game to date. Cosmic Avenger is similar in concept to Scramble, but is even more fun to play.

You are a pink spaceship travelling in alien territory. The farther you penetrate the defense, the more threatening the alien attacks become. You encounter numerous types of enemy artillery, including missiles, fighter bombs, rockets and UFOs. When you lose a ship (not your last one), the game continues at about where your last ship was blown up. Sometimes, however, if you lose a ship just before the beginning of a new board, the game resumes at the start of the next board.

I would advise beginners to play defensively until they get accustomed to the game. A conservative strategy will also help the novice become familar with the configurations of the three boards. To do this, avoid all rocket launchers and any other threatening objects. Fire missiles only to avoid colliding with flying objects.

But by the time you get to board three, you better come out firing continuously.

Stay in the safe channel, travel as slowly as possible and fire away. A sonar warning is heard when approaching this board. You should listen for this sound because board three must be entered from the center of the screen—and slowly—to avoid collisions with the ice walls. So when you hear the ring, get in the middle and slow down!

Lady Bug (Coleco/ColecoVision)

Lady Bug could quite possibly be regarded as the top maze-type TV-game in existence. It's superior to the Atari VCS Pac-Man and Odyssey 2's court-enjoined K.C. Munchkin. While Pac-Man nuts will probably prefer the Atari 5200 Pac-Man, others will find themselves drawn to this game.

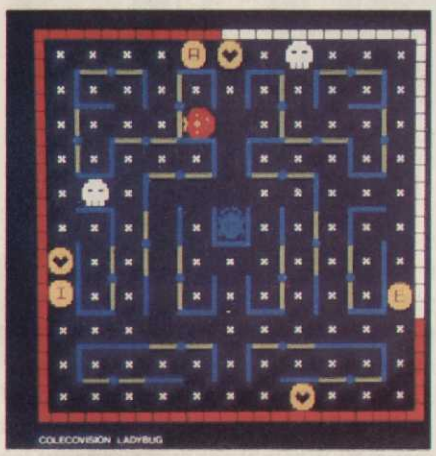
In addition to navigating around a maze, Lady Bug requires knowledge of various objects on the board and how they affect the playing of the game and/or your point score. The graphics, the many game features and the continually increasing challenge of higher

boards make it hard to put down the controller and stop playing.

Lady Bug has more complicated features than the arcade Pac-Man. You may eat "hearts" to increase point values up to five times, and alphabetic letters to get extra lady bugs or a point-laden "special." (This latter bonus reminds me of the quiz show award where the winner is allowed to run around a supermarket and get—at no expense—all the food he can throw in his shopping cart in an allotted time.) You must always avoid the deadly white "Skulls" that are placed randomly about the garden.

Basically, though, the object is to rack up points by guiding a lady bug through a maze of solid partitions and swinging doors, gobbling flowers and other objects without being eaten by pursuing insects.

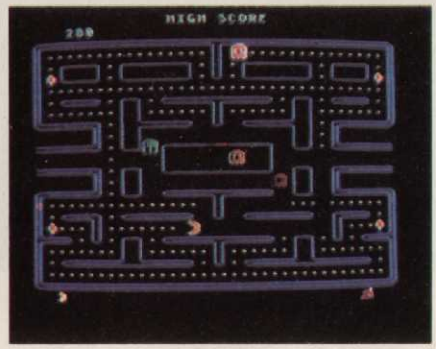
I must be weird. One of the most enjoyable moments of Lady Bug for me happens when I'm followed closely by a bug, run through a swinging door and slam it in its face, rendering the bug helpless on the other side. It's also possible to lure bugs so they run into skulls on the board, meeting their untimely demise totally through your sly machinations. I call this the "Sadist's Skull Strategy."



Pac-Man (Atari/5200)

The King of the Arcades, Pac-Man, qualifies for inclusion in the top 25 TV-games thanks to the new 5200 Pac-Man cartridge. Atari's previous attempt, an adaptation of the arcade game for the VCS, just didn't work; but this one does. For those of you into numbers, I'd estimate that the 5200 Pac-Man has about 80 percent of the authenticity of the original game. (I'd give the VCS version a 35-40 percent authenticity rating.)

Pac-Man looks like himself again. The ghosts are four different colors and



turn a nice, dark blue when vulnerable to attack. Each board is identified by a symbol, starting with the well-known beginner's cherries and ending with the pro-player's key. The sounds of the game have also been reproduced faithfully. There are even intermissions, where we're entertained by progressively more risque Pac-antics.

Now for the bad news: The 5200 joystick does not allow you to accurately maneuver Pac-Man. The key, I've found, to operating it is to position the joystick *exactly* in one of the four positions. If the joystick is in between these positions, Pac-Man may not move at all—or he may move east when you want him to go north. This 90-degree disparity, at worst, will cause you to lose a man when you're in a tight spot.

Yes, there are predetermined patterns that will allow you to complete the various mazes, just as there are for the arcade and VCS games. However, rather than include any patterns, I'm going to let you work them out for yourself. Let's face it: Once you've got the cartridge, you don't have to put in any quarters.

Super Challenge Football (M Network)

There's no question that this is *the* football game to play on the Atari VCS. Super-Challenge Football is a successful compromise between Atari's oversimplified Football cartridge and Mattel's complicated NFL Football. It's easy to learn and yet there's enough to the game to make setting up plays and executing them a real challenge.

At the beginning of each play, both players give instructions to each of their four linemen. After the ball is snapped, the quarterback can run in any of eight directions or pass. The instant the ball is passed, control is transferred from the quarterback to the receiver. Meanwhile, the defensive player controls the linebacker, which can either "blitz" or stay back, covering possible receivers. All of this is accomplished with the VCS joystick.

Here's an important defensive tip: If you're on defense, and the quarterback runs way beyond all your men, don't give up. Have your linebacker run in the opposite direction of the quarterback, off the edge of the screen. He'll miraculously reappear on the other edge—in front of the quarterback! Now you've got another crack at tackling him. I call this "The 20-Yard Hyperspace."

My only complaint with Super Challenge Football is that two players

are required to play at the same time. I think it would be more enjoyable if it had been programmed so a solitary player could battle the computer.

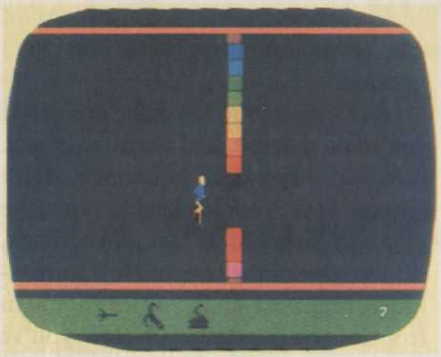
Swordquest I (Atari/VCS)

Swordquest I (aka, Earthworld) is the first in a highly imaginative and unprecedentedly challenging series of four adventure-type puzzles, similar in concept to the myriad adventure games that are currently perplexing owners of personal computers. Swordquest is not unlike Atari's Adventure and Superman games, except that the puzzles are far more complex.

The basic objective is to solve the puzzle in each of the games by progressing through a series of boards, applying logic and also eye-to-hand coordination to overcome game obstacles. Clues are located both in the cartridge and in the comic book that accompanies each game. The treasure seeker must go back and forth between the two to solve the puzzle.

According to the folks at Atari, there are only three people in the world who

know the solution (which is worth $25,000 to the first person who can solve each of the Swordquest puzzles, plus a jeweled sword with $50,000 to the strategist who can unravel the "final puzzle").



Even the programmers don't know the answers!

Obviously, I don't know the answer any more than you do. However, in experimenting with Earthworld, I discovered certain clues that may help. Here's one: See the light green house? When you enter it at the beginning of the game (move five houses upward or seven downward), you'll notice a colorful rainbow display with a "16" and "4" indicated therein. This undoubtedly is a meaningful clue. Good luck!

Uston's Least Favorite Games

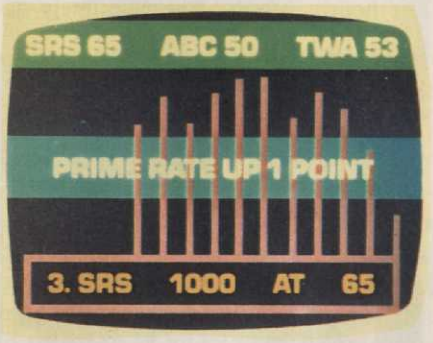
ACTIVISION: *Checkers*
APOLLO: *Raquetball, Skeet Shoot*
ASTROCADE: *Acey-Deucy 5002, Poker*
ATARI: *Blackjack, Casino, Football, Frog Pond, Fun with Numbers*
EMERSON: *Alien Invader*
MATTEL: *Blackjack, Las Vegas Roulette*
N.A.P. *Alpine Skiing, Breakdown, Casino Slot Machine, Invaders from Hyperspace, Pachinko, Pocket Billiards, Take the Money and Run, Tic-Tac-Toe 5001, Thunderball, Volleyball, War of Nerves*
VIDTEC: *Commando Raid*
ZIRCON: *Lunar Lander, Slot Machine*

The Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt (N.A.P.)

The Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt is undoubtedly the most educational new cartridge I've seen. It blows me away because it teaches things I didn't even learn at Harvard Business School. Just by playing the game, you will learn, automatically and painlessly, an enormous amount about the operation of this country's economy.

Each player is an affluent American investor, provided with a starting bankroll of $100,000 cash. As an investor, you can buy stocks in various American industries, ranging from relatively conservative stocks such as Aetna Life to high-flying speculative stocks like "Wildcat Western Oil" (a fictitious company involved in oil exploration). You operate in a manner similar to "specialists" on the New York Stock Exchange—spending most of your time staring at a ticker tape of stock prices (top of screen) and a tape of up-to-the-minute news flashes (middle) that can have a dramatic effect on stock prices.

Player strategy is largely dependent upon correct interpretation of the effect of the news flashes on investments. For example, the news flash, "Three-day Work Week Cuts Industry Output" would have a depressing effect on many



domestic stocks, as would "Nationwide Strike Threat."

I have a suggestion to teachers of college-level financial management courses: Why not conduct a series of lab sessions in which the class divides up into teams and plays this game? A few such sessions will teach most of the students far more than they'd probably learn by reading some dry, ponderous textbook.

Ken Uston's other favorite games are: Asteroids, Astrosmash, Defender, Donkey Kong (Coleco Vision), Frogger, Galaxian (5200), Major League Baseball, Megamania, Missile Command (5200), Pitfall, Planet Patrol, Space Battle, Space Hawk, Space Invaders (5200), Space Spartans, Venture and Word Zapper. ▲

COIN-OP SHOP

Hot Fun in the Wintertime

By John Holmstrom

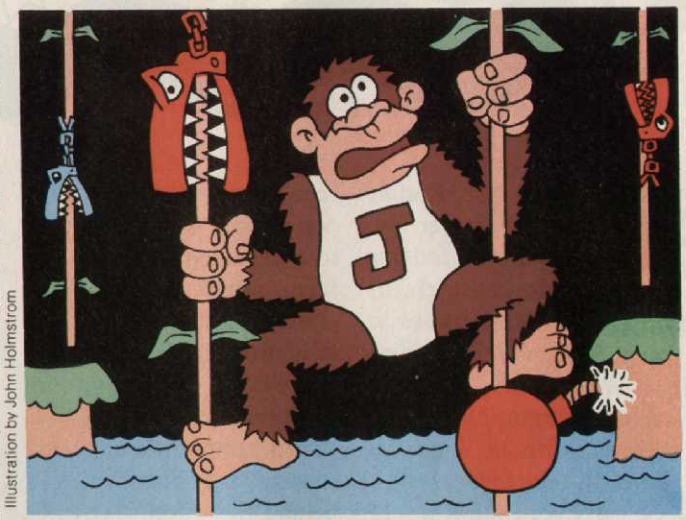


Illustration by John Holmstrom

After several boring months of searching for new thrills at the arcade, a whole slew of virgin games has arrived to delight and annoy me. Since I'm what you'd probably call a Donkey Kong fanatic, let's go right over to Nintendo's **Donkey Kong Junior**. Mario has captured Kong. Junior, his cute little son, is assigned to rescue him. But Junior's so clumsy that making him climb up and down vines and chains becomes this game's real challenge. (You do this with a four-way stick and the ol'jump button.)

Poor Kong. Mario's got him all tied up in the second screen. Junior must unlock his pop by climbing up the chains while avoiding Mario's deadly bluebirds and the evil snapping pods. Accomplish this and you're treated to an intermission featuring the revenge of the Donkey Kongs. Then, it's back to the jungle. The third screen, a weird tropical bird cage maze, is like the elevator screen (complete with a springboard shortcut), and the fourth, Mario's Hideout (not a nightclub!), replaces the coal mine.

Donkey Kong Junior can be frustrating at first, but once you learn the game it becomes very satisfying and a lot of fun. I play best when I'm aggressive. Go through the mazes as quickly as you can, leaving the scattered fruit bombs alone, unless they just happen to come in handy. Watch the patterns of enemy objects — not what Junior is doing. Since he's a clod make sure he jumps quickly once he's at the top of the maze or he'll get picked off by the birds and pods.

While DKJr. doesn't really improve upon the original (i.e., Ms. Pac) it's not a ripoff either (i.e., Asteroids Deluxe). What it is simply is the second chapter in the continuing saga of Donkey Kong. It combines new challenges and concepts with a few familiar elements to create a new game that is perhaps more difficult than the original, but just as interesting and addicting. I recommend it highly.

I wish I could say the same about Taito's **Jungle King** (you may know it as Jungle Hunt, its new name). While carnival music plays, a Tarzan-type character swings between vines, then dives into a river to poach some pink alligators, runs up a hill and jumps over rocks, before finally rescuing a woman from two dancing African warriors who are cooking her alive for dinner. Phew! Beating Jungle King requires careful timing when you jump from vine to vine, avoiding the air bubbles in the water, learning how to kill alligators (easier said than done), ducking under boulders you can't jump over and jumping over fierce and hungry Africans. All this doesn't take a great deal of skill, just patience. For my taste, Jungle King is a dull, monotonous exercise.

Cinematronic's **Treasure Hunt,** another loser, is based on the Jack and the Beanstalk fairy tale. When originally released as Jack the Giant Killer, it required great patience *and* skill to prevent Jack from falling off the vine or clouds. But Cinematronics, by fixing it so that Jack can't fall off, has turned it into just another climb-and-shoot game. Jack climbs up the vine, walks over the clouds to the castle, climbs up stairs and platforms to get to the Giant's lair, steals a princess, slips down the vine, and then chops down the beanstalk. Even the new soundtrack doesn't compare to the original one. I don't know if there's such a thing as going back after they've already gone back to the drawing board a third time, but in this case, I'd suggest it. Simply put: Bring back Jack!

Centuri's **Swimmer** is more to my liking. It goes like this: A man swims upstream diving under logs and picking up

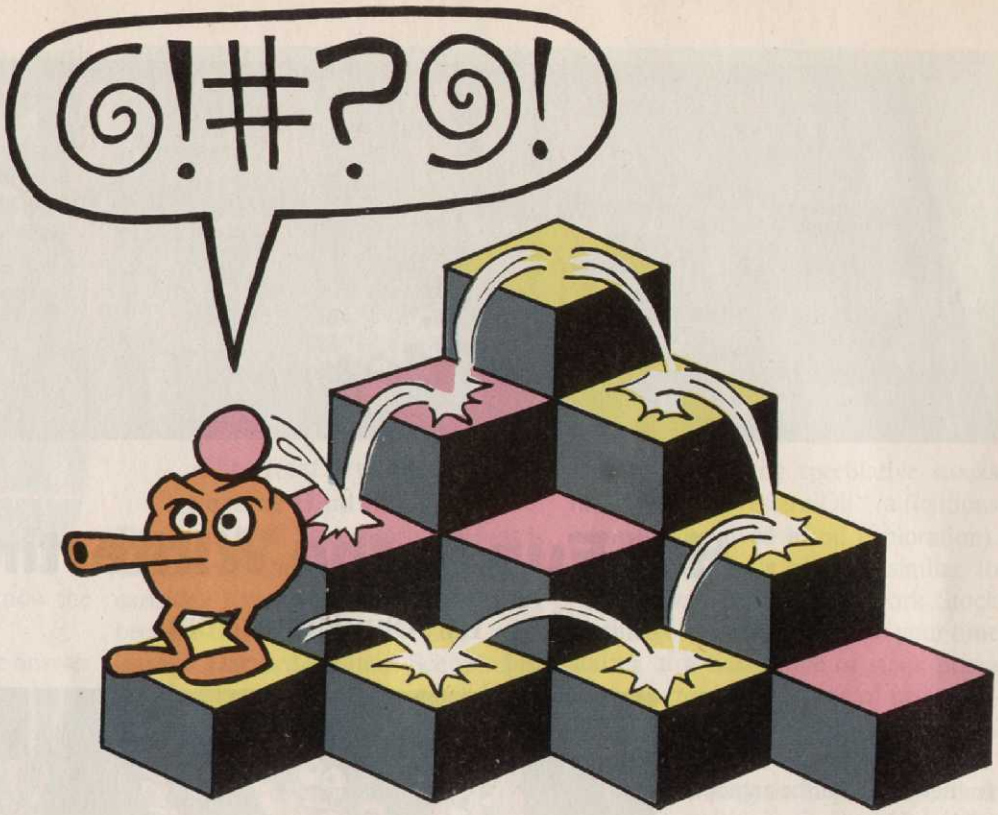


Illustration by John Holmstrom

fruit for extra points. On each level, a different breed of sea pest threatens the swimmer's safety, and a giant log or two clogs up the river. The real fun comes at the very end, when the swimmer must pass a giant crab. On the second level and beyond, he can eat a power pill that is floating around nearby. It enables him to kill the sea pests for extra points. Swimmer's a nice, fun game, even if it's not very original.

Now if you're looking for something different, then I think I found the game for you. It's called **Q*bert**, or @!#?@! This is absolutely the weirdest—and funniest—game ever! Once you see Gottlieb's Q*bert (I found it on test), you won't forget it.

Q*bert is a kiwi-like creature who hops around on a 3-D illusion pyramid. The idea is to get it to land on specific colors. Strange creatures bedevil Q*bert, the chief villain being Coily the snake, a goofy guy who disappears when Q*bert outsmarts him by jumping off the pyramid onto a floating disc that carries him to the top square. You'll need to find useful jumping patterns, learn the moves of the other objects and creatures, jump on anything green, and develop split-second timing. Most players can't score very high, though, 'cause they're too busy laughing! Q*bert has star quality written all over it. Mark my words.

For the more "serious" player, whose only requirement is lots of ammo, check out Sega's **Sub-Roc 3-D**—the most realistic spaceship game I've ever seen. After you get past the cabinet and controls which are similar to Battlezone's, take a peek inside. The graphics are super-realistic, almost photographic. You can go underwater, blasting deep-sea submarines, float on the surface, eluding torpedoes and destroyer fire, and fly in space dodging bombs and blowing up enemy craft. Everything comes at you in 3-D, and the sound effects are deafening. All these state of the art thrills and spills are even worth the 50-cent investment, though barely.

To survive in Sub-Roc 3-D, avoid the torpedoes and develop an accurate shot, especially since you don't have the advantage of rapid-fire. Beware of controls—they're a bit sluggish. Sub-Roc also moves a little slower than your average space battle, which takes some adjusting to. In terms of pace, Zaxxon it ain't. But Zaxxon ain't Sub-Roc either.

Another out-of-this world game with a couple of new twists is Williams' **Moon Patrol**. It's the first science fiction driving game I've ever seen, and it's a good one. The graphics are interesting, the game-play is challenging but not impossible, and the soundtrack is pleasant. It's like taking a Sunday drive on the moon. Your lunar jalopy, seen from a third-person perspective, drives from left-to-right along a bumpy surface, jumping over moon craters, blasting moon rocks in its way, and zapping alien spaceships that hang out overhead and try to kill you. Like Scramble, there's no real strategy to it: Just be careful behind the wheel. (Actually, there's a joystick and the ever popular jump device.)

Don't think the pinball companies don't have a few more tricks up their sleeves, too. In the what-will-they-think-of-next department, there's **Varcon** by Williams, the first real pinball game ever built in a video cabinet. The playing field is small, about the size of the average backglass, which means a lot more flipper action. Unfortunately, you don't have much to aim the ball at, plus you can't nudge the machine either. If you knock out the right targets and hit the ball into the left chute, a miniature playing field lights up in the middle for a while, although again there's not a whole lot to shoot at. Varcon is an interesting novelty, but that's about all.

A more traditional new model is called **Punk**. That's right — five years after punk died, Gottlieb comes up with a punk-rock game. But don't stop reading yet! Punk is the best pinball game in years. It has an old-fashioned pinball playing field—no gimmicky multi-levels, tricky passage tubes, or spinning wheels—plenty to shoot at, including several target banks and lanes, and good, strong bumpers to make the game fast and furious. In addition, the flippers are quick and accurate, and the multi-ball action keeps you on your toes. And best of all is the soundtrack. It's real new wave, complete with drumbeats, guitar chords, and weird noises. How punk can you get?

Hey, who says quarters can't buy happiness? ▲

Coin-op columnist Eugene Jarvis took the month off, but he did find time to be interviewed for "Zen and the Art of Donkey Kong" on page 30.

SCORE!

72, 547, 630

By Sue Adamo

It was The Golden State against The Cotton State when California faced off against North Carolina in the first interstate video game competition the last weekend in August (27-30).

Walter Day, Director of the Twin Galaxies International Scoreboard, which organized the event, reports that North Carolina, a team with "intense talent," entered the competition as the slight favorite. But, in a classic cliffhanger, California prevailed, 10-8.

Each team played on its home turf. More than 100 contestants showed up at Phil's Family Amusement Center in Lakewood, Ca., while approximately the same number gathered at Light Years Amusement Center in Wrightsville Beach, N.C. A go-between informed each team of the other's scores.

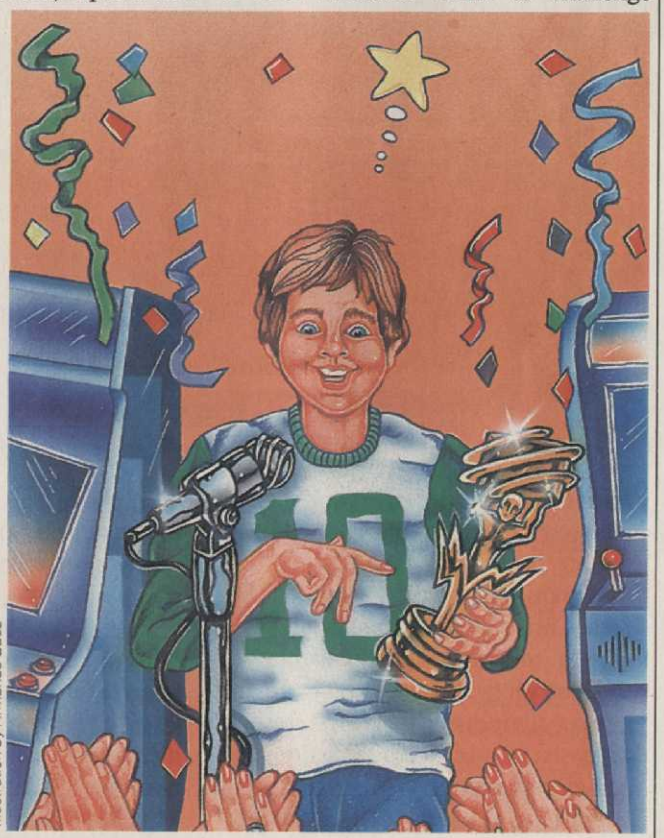


Illustration by Armando Baez

California's last-minute victory was largely due to Robert Wycoff of Downey, Ca., who broke the Zaxxon then-world record with 1,407,000 points, surpassing N.C.'s best by more than 100,000. Wycoff did it in 90 minutes.

Of the 11 records set during the competition (eight by California and three by North Carolina), seven still hold at press time. They are: **Centipede**, 12,311,126, by Mike Baird; **Starcastle**, 7,842,950, by Ron McCoy; **Frogger**, 442,330, by Mark Robichek; **Tron**, 3,195,329, by Sterling Ouchi; **Crazy Climber**, 482,650, by William Lee; **Dig Dug**, 6,198,490, by Antonio Medina; and **Berzerk**, 76,850, by Joel West.

Meanwhile, Day says he's assembling a U.S. National Team to challenge Japan, perhaps as early as March.

* * *

SMASH DIET: Next time you want to pick up a quick $25,000 cash, think about investing in an Intellivision and signing up for a major league video game tournament like Mattel's recent $100,000 Astrosmash Shootoff. That's exactly what Manuel Rodriguez, 18, of Stockton, Ca., did. Once he got the

(Continued on page 81)

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- 16-page Home Computer supplement
- Interview with a video game visionary
- Hollywood makes its move after *Tron*
- More tips on Donkey Kong Jr.
- A dream game for '83
- Playing games with cable TV

ON SALE:

DECEMBER 28

HARD SELL

ColecoVision's Well Worth the Wait

By Michael Blanchet

Six months ago, it was a fairly simple chore to buy a TV-game system. There were really only two choices: You could either go for Atari's $125 Video Computer System (VCS) and have access to a library of more than 100 titles, or—for $100 more—you could join the ranks of the elite, discriminating Intellivision owner and inherit the spiffy graphics and sophisticated play that's typical of Mattel's cartridge catalog. Most likely, you ended up buying what you thought you could afford.

This fall, a whole new wave of game systems has been fighting for shelf space in America's retail and department stores. One clearly stands tall above the rest. You may already know it. It's called ColecoVision. Checking in at $189, it is being publicized as a third-generation TV-game system. Advertisements don't lie, do they? Let's see.

Photo by Perry Greenberg

Standing tall above the rest of the game systems is ColecoVision. It has the largest amount of random-access memory (RAM) —32K— of any system in its price range and boasts the infamous Donkey Kong as its "gimme" cartridge.

Hardware

ColecoVision is characterized by clean, straight lines and a low profile. There are only two switches—on/off and reset—positioned on top of the console. These are adjacent to the cartridge receptacle. The channel selector is located on the rear of the console, which makes sense since once it's set it rarely has to be changed.

Just below the receptacle, in the front of the console, is a five-inch opening marked "Expansion Module Interface." These three words are the beauty of ColecoVision. With the hope of rendering obsolescence obsolete, Coleco is developing a series of add-on peripherals that plug into the interface. Each one is intended to expand the system's capabilities in a unique and exciting way.

Expansion Module #1, due out before Christmas, will make all VCS-compatible cartridges playable on ColecoVision. Just connect it to the master component, pop in Asteroids and voila. (As an added attraction, you can also wire your VCS joysticks and paddles to Module #1.) Expansion module #2 turns the system into a Formula 1 race car. The package will include a table-top dashboard, steering wheel, accelerator pedal, and the cartridge that makes this all possible: Turbo.

Even though, at $90, Module #1 represents a sizable investment, it should be a godsend for VCS owners who are ready to upgrade to a better system. Module #2, on the other hand, is more of a luxury item. I can't see spending $90 on a racing kit unless Coleco is prepared to produce more cartridges to go along with it.

Expansion Module #3 is somewhat of a question mark as well. Everyone knows that Coleco is planning to release a keyboard computer attachment, yet no delivery date or specifications are available. Rumor has it that Module #3 will be ready by next Christmas and sell for less than $200. Rumors also abound that an adapter for all Intellivision-compatible titles is in the works. Not true, says Mike Katz, Coleco's marketing vice-president. He insists the company has no such plans.

Technically speaking, the ColecoVision mainframe boasts the largest amount of random-access memory (RAM)—32K—of any TV-game sys-

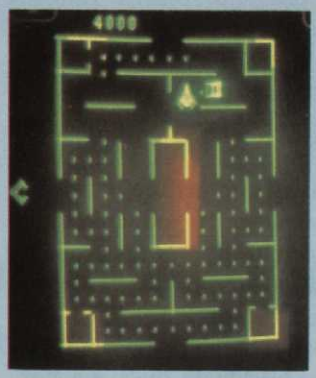
(Continued on page 74)

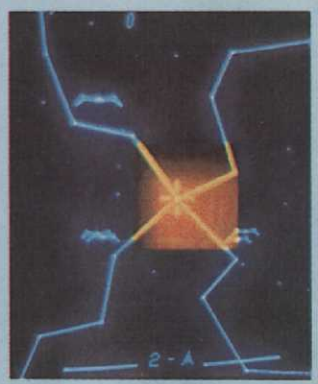
Vectrex: A Unique Alternative

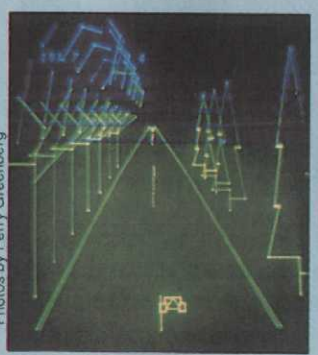
In the world of home video game systems, Vectrex stands alone.

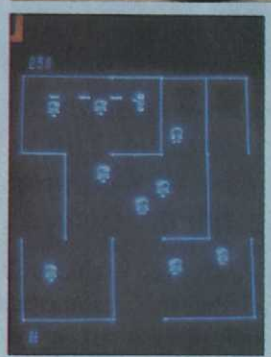
Literally.

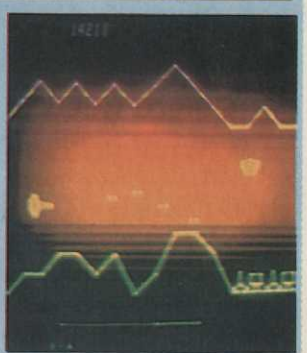
Unlike its forefathers, it doesn't rely on that most beloved piece of furniture, the TV set, for game play. This clever little unit has its own video monitor built right in. If this means convenience and portability for you, just think of what it will mean to the TV-watching members of your family. The price is about $200.











Photos by Perry Greenberg

Top right: GCE's Vectrex with built-in Minestorm. Counter-clockwise, from top left: Clean Sweep, Star Trek, Hyperchase, Berzerk and Scramble.

Hardware

Small (14 x 9 x 11 inches), somewhat stubby in appearance, Vectrex is constructed with black plastic and weighs an easy-toting 15 pounds. The joystick console, measuring 7½ x 2½ x 1½ inches, stores neatly into the base of the unit and is connected to it by a self-coiling cord.

Built into the console is a controller that comes equipped with a ¾-inch joystick and four buttons. Though less comfortable than the hand-grip stick of the Atari VCS, the Vectrex stick is generally responsive. I did, however, find it difficult to aim in Armour Attack, a tank game, and maneuver the vacuum cleaner in a maze game called Clean Sweep. The buttons to the right of the joystick provide additional controls for many of the games, enhancing the reproduction of the games' complexity.

The hardware includes an eight-bit microprocessor with a 64K RAM capacity. Vectrex's nine-inch screen is the same shape as most arcade screens but more vertical than one you'd find on a conventional television. A terrific Asteroid-type game called Minestorm is the resident Vectrex game.

Graphics

Rather than the raster graphics found in all other home systems (that's because conventional TV can only produce raster), Vectrex employs vector graphics. Vector images, like those used in Asteroids, Rip-Off and Tempest, are linear, in which sharply outlined figures float smoothly around the screen. The Vectrex monitor is black and white, and is used in conjunction with color plastic overlays. They provide the mere illusion of color.

Software

The philosophy over at GCE seems to be: If it works in the arcades, it'll work at home. Most of the cartridges (retailing at about $30 each) are similar to or licensed versions of some of the most popular arcade games. At press-time, 13 titles had been announced.

Unlike its competitors' software, Vectrex's games feature few variations and are not made for simultaneous play between two people. Also lacking is a pause button and a hard/easy switch that gives novices a chance to get the feel of a game. However, the first screens of the games tend to be easy introductory passages to the more difficult levels.

As I mentioned earlier, Vectrex has one of the best Asteroids-type games built right into the system. **Minestorm** begins with ominous tones signaling the arrival of the enemy ship. In some remote corner of the galaxy, the ship lays down a trail of mines. The stage is now set for your stellar minesweeper to clear out these threatening forces by blowing them all to bits before they do likewise to your ship.

The mines move as smoothly and randomly as the rocks in arcade-Asteroids and are nothing like the monotonous vertical rotations of those found

(Continued on page 79)

tem in its price range. With this much memory at its disposal, a game could conceivably have 50 separate characters, each moving independently on the screen at the same time.

Controllers

The system's two hand-held controllers consist of joysticks, fire/action buttons and keypads. Each connects to the console by telephone-type cords. When idle, the controllers fit neatly into a compartment scooped out of the main unit.

Hailed by Coleco as "arcade quality," the joysticks don't really compare to their coin-op counterparts, though they are a big improvement over the cheap, cumbersome devices offered by other TV-game manufacturers. For gamers accustomed to a stick that requires a heavy hand, this one will probably take a bit of getting used to. Since it is only one-inch long and has a knob for a grip, I've found that a soft flick of the fingertips is all you need to get the desired reaction. My only problem has been trying to pinpoint which of the eight directions I want to move in.

Each controller has two buttons, one on either side of the housing just below the joystick. Coleco should be commended for not forgetting southpaws, who fire with the right hand. As for the 12 touch-sensitive bubble switches on the face of the controller, they seem to have little use except to select game options and to serve as remote on/off and reset buttons.

Though these controllers are far from perfect, they draw high marks for comfort. Measuring only 2½ inches across and one inch deep, they handle particularly well. This should help relieve the hand and forearm fatigue most gamers suffer. For those who log mucho hours of playing time, the short joystick may even prove to be a blessing in disguise. Using the soft touch should spare the stick wear and tear and even give it another life or two.

One final note: If you've bought ColecoVision already, you are probably aware that Coleco has discontinued the so-called "speed roller" feature. The company decided that moving Mario more briskly up the ramp (for example) simply was not worth the engineering headaches it was causing. "We could have done it with some sophistication," says Katz, "but we concluded that the advantage to the consumer was not worth the cost to us."

Coleco wants to render obsolescence obsolete with a series of expansion modules. The VCS adaptor, pictured above, will make VCS-compatible cartridges playable on ColecoVision.

Software

The initial ColecoVision library reads like a *Who's Who of Arcade Games*. This alone makes Coleco competitive with Atari and gives it an edge over Mattel. Nintendo's Donkey Kong, the "gimme" cartridge, is Coleco's coup, a triumph in resourcefulness and execution. Rounding out the first wave of coin-op translations are Sega's Space Fury, Zaxxon, Turbo and Carnival; Exidy's Mouse Trap and Venture; and Universal's Cosmic Avenger and Lady Bug.

The VCS versions of Space Invaders and Missile Command and Astrocade's Galactic Invasion (aka, Galaxian) were the best coin-op conversions until ColecoVision came along. So far I've played Donkey Kong, Venture, Cosmic Avenger and Lady Bug and all are unsurpassed in arcade authenticity. For example, Donkey Kong has not been compromised at all. Virtually every single nuance that made it such a hit is captured and recreated with startling realism in the Coleco cartridge.

With the exception of the conveyor belt screen, it's Donkey Kong down to the last detail. Scores are tallied just like in the arcade game, and the familiar soundtrack is even recited note for note. Purists beware: Kong doesn't swipe the girl and climb to his perch at the start or plummet headfirst after completing the second screen. But these are minor omissions, to say the least. *(Turn to Soft Spot beginning on page 66 for Ken Uston's write-ups on Cosmic Avenger and Venture.—Ed.)*

Licensed arcade titles may be the backbone of the ColecoVision library, but that's not all Coleco has to offer. Rescue in Gargamel's Castle, featuring the familiar Smurf cast of characters, is a surprisingly strong original cartridge. Since the Smurfs are cartoon figures, they reproduce well in a video game. I don't think Walt Disney could have done a better job recreating them than Coleco's engineers did.

Rescue in Gargamel's Castle is a horizontal version of Donkey Kong. The ever-lecherous Gargamel has snatched up Smurfette and has her tucked away in his lab under lock and key. Assigned to save her is Smurf, the Mario in this saga. To reach the villain's hideout, Smurf must make his way through woods, fields, and caverns, and elude the deadly denizens of the forest. Smurf jumps, ducks or simply runs away.

To play on ColecoVision, just plug in a cartridge. First you'll see a menu of Coleco's games, followed by a readout of game options. Each game generally has four variations to choose from—either to speed up or slow down the pace of the game. Select whichever option you prefer with the keypad, and you're off. This all takes about 15 seconds.

There is one hitch in this whole procedure: Whenever you press reset, you have to look at the menu and select the option again. Those 15 seconds start to add up after awhile. All you want to do

(Continued on page 79)

BULL'$-EYE

Year of the Home Computer

By David Leibowitz

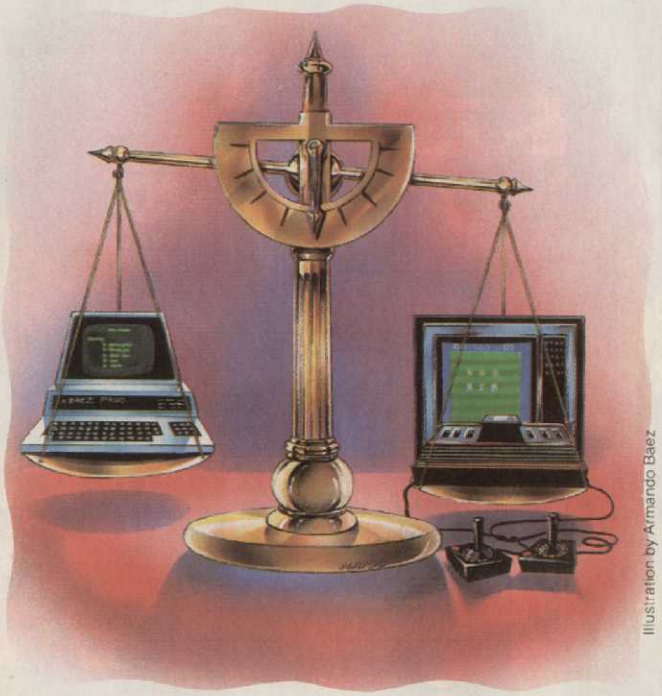


Illustration by Armando Baez

Anyone on Wall Street will tell you that the Stock Market hates uncertainty. Good news or bad, the market will take it in stride, but create uncertainty and watch the Market withdraw into itself. When the future is unclear, investors remain on the sidelines, awaiting further developments.

An excellent case in point is the home computer situation. Virtually all industry observers agree that the next several years will see enormous growth in unit sales, but they become unnerved when asked to predict the prime corporate beneficiaries of the consumer's largess.

While it's not difficult to compare the computers now on the market on the basis of features and price, this information is unlikely to be of much help beyond Christmas. Essentially, this is Wall Street's problem: How do you evaluate an industry when you can't identify all the potentially significant participants?

This much we do know: Approximately 1.5 million home computers will be purchased by the end of '82, as compared to 350,000 last year. The key winners so far are Commodore (VIC-20), Atari/Warner Communications (400, 800), Radio Shack/Tandy (TRS-80), Texas Instruments (99/4A), and Timex-Sinclair (1000).

This much we can speculate upon: Atari is expected to announce a new computer (the 600?); Mattel is readying a revised Intellivision that includes a keyboard; Coleco may also soon offer a keyboard for its ColecoVision; and Panasonic (Matsushita) says it will join the home computer sweepstakes, perhaps heralding a Japanese onslaught. Almost every week you hear a rumor that some company is drawing up a new piece of equipment. One of the biggest recent stirs on Wall Street came when it was learned that not only will IBM be in attendance at the upcoming Consumer Electronics Show, but it will have the largest exhibitor's booth.

But who will buy these products and which ones will they buy? Is game playing capability a prime prerequisite or will the purchase be geared to the computer's other capabilities? Put another way: Will the buyer be someone who already owns a TV-game system and is now

(Continued on page 82)

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THE ZYDROID LEGION

Words/Lou Stathis
Visuals/Matt Howarth
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Mach 7.82

Chapter Two
A CHILI-DOG TO GO

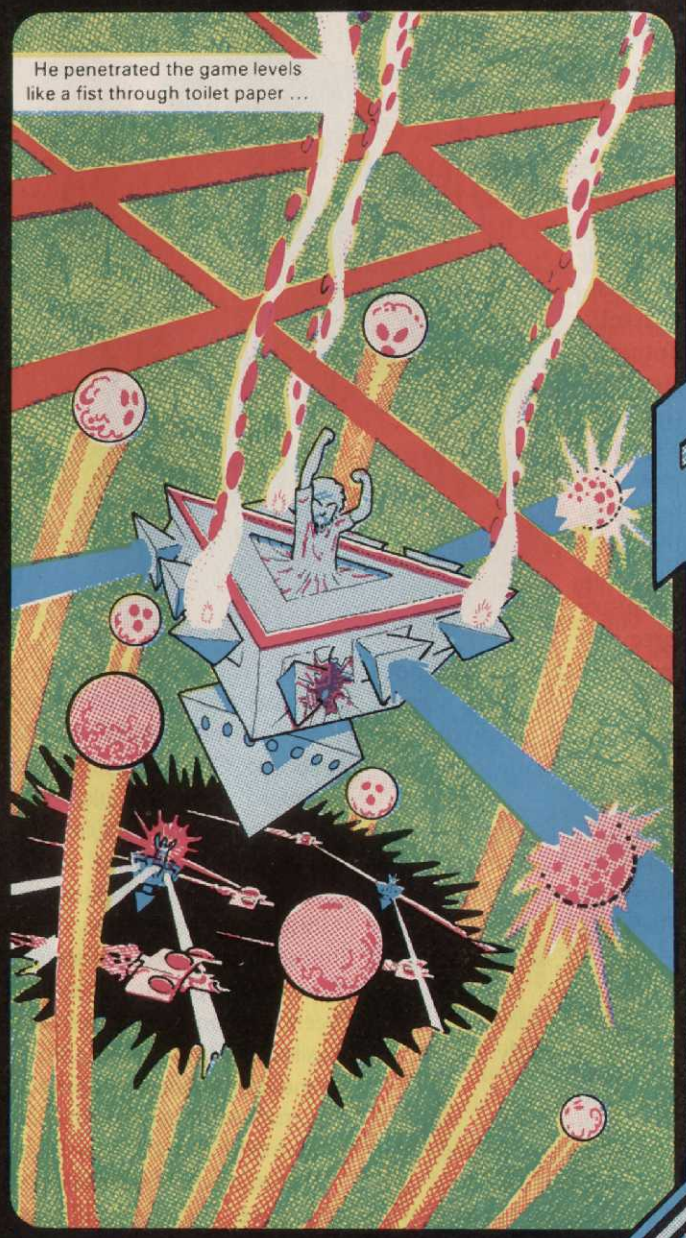
So Far: The Zydroid game is killing the competition! You don't play the game, you live it! Just how far, though, can this go?

Level 1: SOLO RUN: entry into Zydroid space. Familiarization with Combat Capsules through mirror-image dogfighting. Standard issue weaponry.

Levels 2-5: BASIC MISSION STRATEGY: Combatants acquire group strike skills and defensive procedures while engaging a computer-controlled drone force. Access to cruiser-class weaponry.

Levels 6-8: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL WARFARE: With victory over his computer foe, the Zydroid Point Man gains access to the Master Circuit, which controls all aspects of reality. Space itself becomes both enemy and arsenal.

Level 9: ALIEN APOCALYPSE: Zydroid Legions face dimensional intrusion from hostile alien hordes. Point Man defends acquired space using all weaponry. Survivors rewarded.

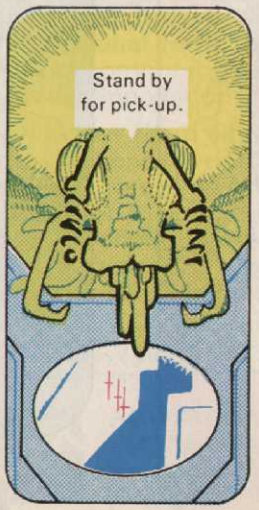


Yow! He's cracked level 9!
What'cha get?
A chili-dog! The reward's a damn chili-dog!
YES! WE HAVE 2 Ydroids

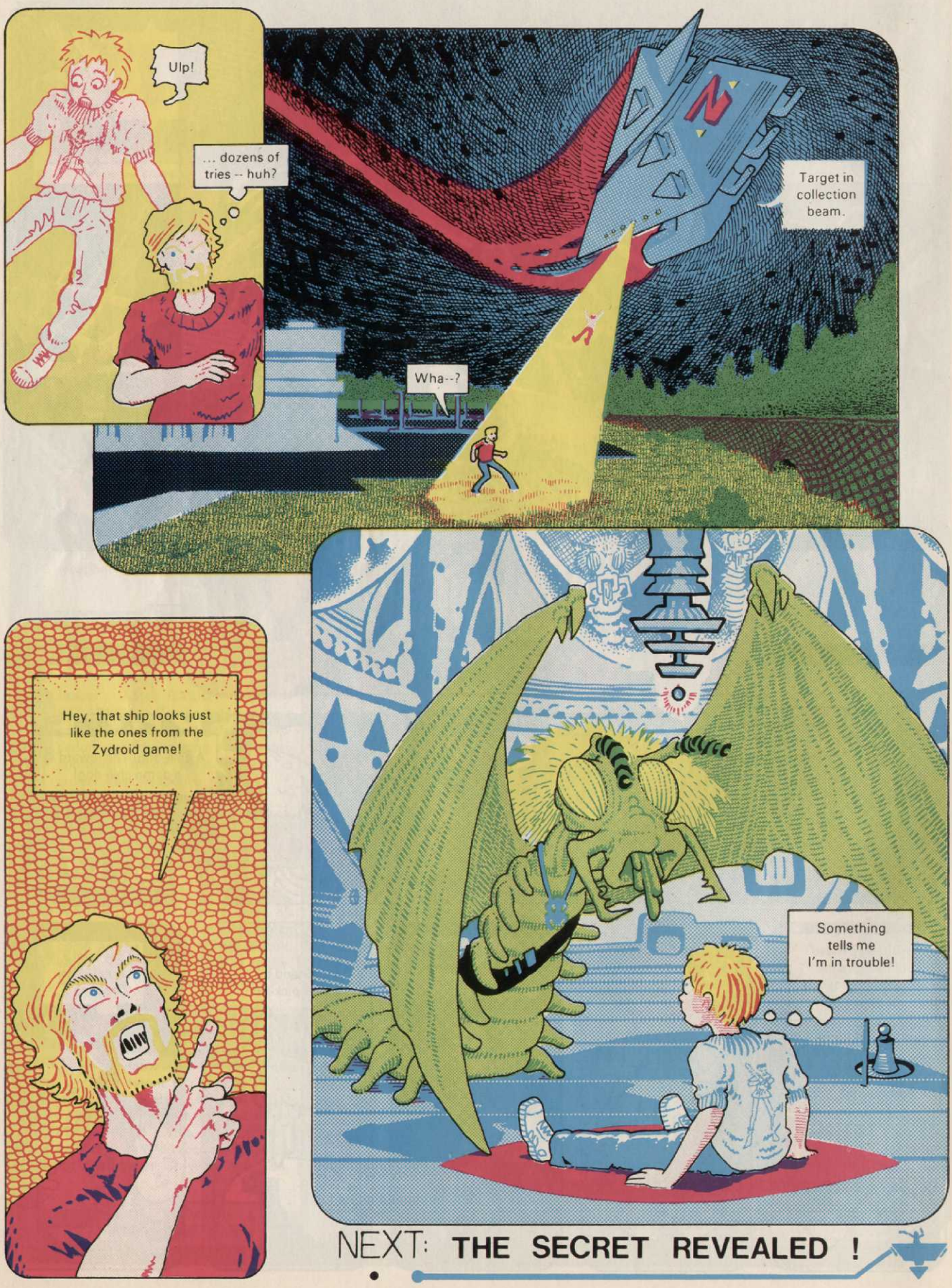
--Sheesh, these things give me heartburn. You eat 'em, don't you?
Yup!

Recruit pinpointed, sir. Coming within range.

I can't believe that machine gave me a chili-dog!
It's good!


Stand by for pick-up.

That level 9 is a real killer. Took me ...
I want more!



NEXT: **THE SECRET REVEALED !**

ColecoVision

(Continued from page 74)

is play the game again, but the machine won't let you. What's the point of all this? By the way, this happens only when you reset in the middle of a game, which I have a bad habit of doing. And while I'm complaining, Coleco's engineers might have added a pause feature to the system. There's nothing like running up a high score and then, suddenly, nature calls. Or just mother. The pause button definitely helps.

Graphics

ColecoVision's visuals are without peer: The crisp, colorful images this system delivers is its forte. The large amount of RAM allotted to characters and action is the primary reason the games look so good.

Like the great majority of the TV-game players, I was weaned on the VCS and have come to accept the nondescript, angular graphics that once plagued most TV-game cartridges. With ColecoVision, for instance, finding your "man" is no longer guesswork. In Donkey Kong, Mario actually looks like Mario—our paunchy, middle-class hero who wears overalls and a Casey Jones cap. And there's no mistaking Kong for anything but the simian he is. The only lifeless character on the screen is the blonde. You'd think some of the guys working in Coleco's engineering department might spend a few hours creating an attractive portrait of our damsel in distress, but noooooooo. . . .

Conclusion

In 1980, Intellivision set the new standard for TV-game quality; it also broke the record for TV-game price tags. With ColecoVision, you have the high standards at a cheaper price, as well as endless add-on possibilities that someday might even include a powerful keyboard that can turn the whole system into a personal computer. But, for now, it's games galore, a true arcade-experience inside your living room. Arcade snobs take note: ColecoVision is the TV-game challenge you've been waiting for. ▲

Vectrex

(Continued from page 73)

in the VCS version. In fact, in some ways, Minestorm is better than its arcade cousin. The combination stick-button controls are remarkably precise. This helps, especially in minefields 2 and 4 when mines release deadly spinners that destroy the offending ship if not eluded by some deft maneuvering. If you love Asteroids and own a Vectrex, there's simply no reason to ever drop a coin in the arcade game again.

The Vectrex **Scramble** plays virtually the same way as it does in the arcade. Though the graphics lack color and pizazz, adjusting to it is no problem. The authentic sound effects help—from "The William Tell Overture" at the start to the clamor of the lasers, bombs and collisions. All in all, this is an admirable clone of an arcade game.

Berzerk is even better. Since the arcade version is bland graphically, little here is lost in the vector translation. The variety of mazes and the vast num-

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ber of robots found in some of them will astonish those familiar with other versions of the game. Oddly, though, the cartridge I have seems to malfunction when high scores are reached.

Not to be outdone by Atari's Night Driver, Activision's Grand Prix, or Coleco's soon-to-be-released Turbo, Vectrex has an excellent first-person racing game called **Hyperchase.** In Hyperchase, you can shift gears, accelerate and brake without the need of an expensive expansion module (a la Coleco's Turbo.) Again, the sound effects are tremendous—as realistic as anything you'd hear on "The Dukes of Hazzard." While I'd prefer a real steering wheel to a joystick, Hyperchase still rates a checkered flag.

Any system hoping to make an inroad into the video game market can't ignore Pac-Man's awesome appeal. I'm sure GCE must have agonized over how to disguise a game effectively enough to avoid Atari's legal wrath and still appeal to the Pac-crowd at the same time. Simple: have a vacuum cleaner zoom around a maze sweeping up dashes while being pursued by something that looks like ice tongs. Oh. . . I see. This version of Pac-Man is a dead duck, however. Pac-Man, of course, is cute, colorful, and cartoon-like. **Clean Sweep** is crude and unappealing; it has about as much personality as my old Hoover. Yet it still plays and sounds better than Atari's what's-his-name?

Last, and unfortunately least, is Vectrex's **Star Trek** game, a poor-man's variation of the first-person space-shooting theme. Star Trek is just a monotonous shoot-'em-up that doesn't provide the fantasy of piloting a space ship and engaging a formidable futuristic foe in cosmic dogfights like so many of the comparable games. There's no mapping, no radar, no fuel levels to gauge. There is a black hole to explore which brings you face to face with the Klingon mother ship, but this doesn't make up for the dull, colorless graphics and the tedious play of Star Trek.

Conclusion

Vectrex may not appeal to everyone. Its graphics are marginal, and some of the games are merely adequate. Plus, no one is planning to manufacture games for it like everyone does for the VCS. That's the bad news. The good news is its uniqueness. The good news is Minestorm, Scramble and Berzerk. Could you imagine Tempest on Vectrex? I could.

Vectrex means never having to say you're sorry about staying home again.

—Perry Greenberg

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Bull's Eye

(Continued from page 75)

trading up, or will the purchaser be more serious than a gamer and seek to use the computer for other applications? Pricing will also be important. With bottom-of-the-line home computers already selling for the equivalent of a top-of-the-line TV-game unit (give or take $25), consumers will be called upon to vote with their pocketbooks.

As always, the stakes are high. If unit sales reach five million next year and surpass 10 million in 1984, as some analysts project, sales would total several billion dollars at retail. Such market potential is worth fighting over. As of this writing, there is no way to accurately forecast the results of this battle. But we are probably on safe ground when we predict that beginning in 1983 and beyond, we will be entering the age of the home computer. ▲

Score!

(Continued from page 71)

system home he began averaging 35 hours of Astrosmash a week preparing for the event. His competition: 13,000 other gamers.

When the dust cleared, Rodriguez walked off with the grand prize. He was one of 16 finalists among the 72 high scorers Mattel had flown to Houston's Astro Village for the two-day competition in September (10-11). Rodriguez's score—635,310— edged out Charles Tappin's second-place finish by a mere 6,000 points. There was a one-hour time limit.

What plans does Rodriguez have for his impressive new bank account? He went right out and bought a Trans-Am.

* * *

THE BIG HEAT: On October 2, Milwaukee County Stadium was the

scene of the World's Largest Pac-Man Tournament. What made it the largest? Well, an Atari 800 computer was used to feed video signals of the game to the nation's largest board, 30 by 60 feet.

Eight contestants competed in the statewide match, which had a five-minute limit on each game. In the final round, T.J. Sileno, 14, of Mequon, Wis. went head-to-head with Brian Riesen, 13, of Menomonee Falls. T.J. took it with 79,110 points against Riesen's 64,560. He was awarded an all-expense paid trip for two to Atari. The competition was organized by Video Exchange.

* * *

SCOREBOARD: When we last looked, these were some of the record scores: **Robotron**, 169,595,225, by Leo Daniels; **Zaxxon**, 1,796,500, by Robert Wycoff; **Battlezone**, 7,148,000, by Sam Blackburn; **Missile Command**, 72,547,630, by Roy Shildt; **Stargate**, 40,001,150, by Ben Gold; **Pac-Man**, 6,248,810 by James Anderson; **Ms. Pac-Man**, 286,410, by Mike Lepkosky, and **Jack the Giant Killer**, 9,401,050, by Michael Phillips. (Thanks to Peter Basica at Play It Again arcade in Frankfort, Ill. for providing this last score.) ▲

Grubb & Koble

(Continued from page 29)

learn, difficult to master. We thought nobody was going to like that sort of stuff.

Grubb: I personally saw Intellivision as a threat from the very beginning. I brought it home as soon as I could get one and saw how my kids instantly gravitated towards their baseball and football games. I'll never forget sitting in engineering meetings and some of the old-guard vice-presidents of engineering telling us that it cost $400 to make, that it could never sell for $200. And they were totally wrong.

I remember the opinions of some higher executives than myself who didn't view it as a threat at all. But then we started to hear some of the sales figures that were coming in—where Atari (the VCS) was set against Mattel (Intellivision). Mattel did very well. I think you could say that if Atari had thought that they had the firmest position in the world, they wouldn't be introducing a new product line (the 5200).

VG: Why did Atari wait so long?

Grubb: Ask Atari.

VG: Are you planning to produce cartridges for the 5200?

Grubb: As soon as we feel that it will sell a sufficient number to make it economically justifiable for us to do so. We have a limited number of engineering resources. And if we find out that the Commodore VIC-20 is going to sell the pants off of the 5200, we'll put our engineering efforts into doing Commodore software. The same goes for Texas Instruments (TI). If we feel that TI will do such a marketing effort that their product (the 99/4A computer) will have tremendous sales, then that's where we'll be.

VG: Will you also be advertising on television, jockeying for position with all the other video game contestants?

Grubb: Yeah, we'll be on TV—*Monday Night Football*, major movies, the whole thing. Over the next six months we're going to spend $10 million telling the consumer that our games are designed by experts for experts and are a lot of fun. Mark my words: There's going to be more money spent on video game advertising this winter than there will be on beer. ▲

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Book Beat

(Continued from page 64)

good editor. Usefulness: 3.

Jeff Rovin's 407-page **The Complete Guide To Conquering Video Games: How to Win Every Game in the Galaxy** (Collier/$5.95) covers TV-games (300 pages), arcade games (50), and computer games (10). Perhaps the most useful part of this book is Rovin's rating system for the TV-games and his use of cross references to games that are similar. But his "Video Originals," cutesy take-offs on many of the games in the book, are either ridiculous or dull nine out of 10 times. Usefulness: 7.

And then there is Ken Uston's **Guide To Buying and Beating the Home Video Games** (NAL/$3.95), a massive paperback tome of nearly 700 pages, covering five major TV-game systems, eight manufacturers, and 180 cartridges, 76 of which are VCS-compatible. For those in search of a good buyer's guide, don't look farther; for those interested in "beating" the games, however, I suggest you keep looking. Uston cheats when he uses the word beat. This is simply not a great strategy book. The writing style is clear and livelier than the books mentioned so far, and you can tell that Uston has spent many hours playing the games himself. But with a revised edition of this book about to be published (see excerpt in Soft Spot section—Ed.), perhaps this guide is outdated already. Usefulness: 8.

When I agreed to review new books on video games, I was told *not* to review Steve Bloom's **Video Invaders** (Arco/$5.95). It would look awkward since he is the editor of this magazine. Okay, I said. Then I began reading Daniel Cohen's **Video Games** (Archway/$1.95), a short, dull, sometimes inaccurate history of video games. The story of video games—from Pong to Tron—should be more interesting reading, and I wanted to recommend a book on that subject. I can't. Not unless I tell you about Bloom's book, which I am not supposed to do. But the hell with that. Most of this book is devoted to a historical look at video games, and the author has done his homework. Quotes from dozens of interviews with industry figures are liberally provided, edited down to the meat. No filler in the history section. And entertainingly written.

It's not easy classifying **Defending The Galaxy: The Complete Handbook of Videogaming** (Triad/$4.95), edited by Michael Rubin; it's also tough justifying it. Organization is apparently not Rubin's strong point. You will find bits of information on Zaxxon, Ms. Pac-Man, and any other current game in dozens of different places, usually side-by-side inane pieces like "Sacred Rules of Jamming In," which lists nine rules for correctly dropping a quarter into the slot. Were all this material collected and published as a spoof, its impact would not be so watered down. This book is pretty funny. . . most of the time.

Mark Baker's **I Hate Videots** (Fireside/$3.95) is, as you might expect, nothing but a humorous look at video gamers and the games they play. Baker provides a history of famous video game dates that runs from 1900 B.C. to 1982 A.D., tell-tale signs of a videot (parents, take notes), true confessions that make the *National Enquirer* look tame, and a section on deprogramming a videot. Origins of each video game are given, along with famous players of those games. This book is very funny. . . most of the time.

As far as humor is concerned, I've saved the best for last: **The Official I-Hate-Videogames Handbook** (Pocket/$2.95) by Emily Prager (this is also the only book by a woman). Prager spoofs the "beat-the-games" books with an innocent smile and a dagger behind her back. Some of her parodies of games are just hilarious. . . and plenty sick. Bezerk Vet is a good example. The author walks you through all the hazards of a video game based on a Vietnam vet's arrival home: Agent Orange tries to poison him. Pac-Cong throws pungee stakes. One of her "observations" is that "If Bezerk Vet kills his wife and two children or scores a direct hit on his dog, Maze II switches to Maze III and a S.W.A.T. team surrounds his house. If Bezerk Vet kills the S.W.A.T. team, he remarries and the game begins again." This book is not for children; it's for the sick side in all of us.

After all is said and done, you've got a tough choice among all the video game books on the market and all those being written now. (I'm sure there are at least a dozen more in the works.) Just remember the carnival operator's bark when you decide to "step right up." His bite may be worse than his bark. ▲

Catalogue

(Continued from page 47)

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Feedback Results #3

Favorite Department: Tie between Soft Spot and Coin-Op Shop; **Favorite Feature:** The House that Pac Built; **What I'd like to see less of:** articles on Atari VCS; Ronald Reagan; **What I'd like to see more of:** new TV-game reviews; Mario breaking his legs; **Favorite form of play:** Tie between arcades and TV-games; **Favorite Arcade Game:** Tie between Tron and Dig-Dug; **Favorite TV-game:** Pitfall; **Favorite ideas/concepts for new games:** Valley Girl— clean the cat box, play Pac-Man, hang out at the malls, do the dishes and your (grody) toenails before you have to go to the orthodontist; R2D2 Beats Reaganomics; The Who's Concert Disaster; Escape the Sandanistas; Shoot Your Intellivision; Kill the Mutants Produced by WW III; Fast-Action Frog in a Blender.

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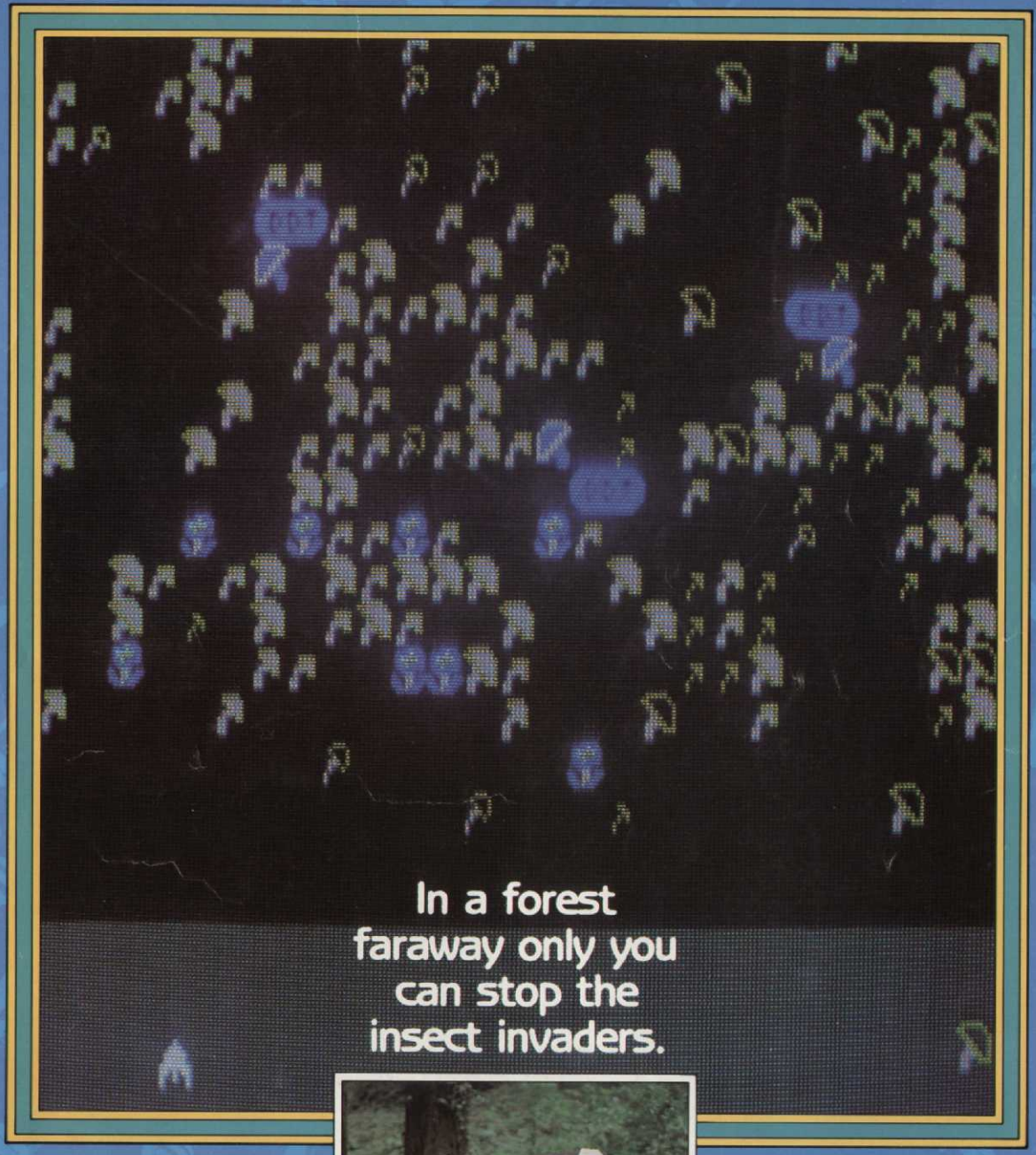

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You're deep in a forest glade . . . you've got to defend yourself from hordes of larger-than-life insects. The bugs keep coming . . . all kinds . . . hundreds of them!

The onslaught continues. The intensity increases. Armed only with bow and arrows, you—as the Archer—must fire through a field of wild mushrooms to hit the Millipede who steadily advances toward you. Single heads shoot out from the sides. Spiders, earwigs and beetles enter to wreak their own special havoc. Suddenly the screen is filled with a wave of bombing bees, dragonflies and mosquitos. Your only chance is to explode one of your DDT bombs. You've stopped them . . . temporarily.

Millipede is a high energy skill challenge all the way. Are you ready to battle the bugs? Remember you risk the sting of defeat . . . but to escape the challenge is unthinkable. Arm yourself. Ask for Millipede where you play coin video games.

ATARI®

Millipede. The adventure continues.

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SATAN'S HOLLOW

T.M.

The hot new battle game that dares you to cross the blazing Bridge of Fire to do battle with the Master of Darkness—Satan of the Hollow!

The Dark Scrolls warn of the perils of Satan's hollow. He, the Prince of Darkness, reigns over an infernal underworld so abhorrent, the grotesque gargoyles who safeguard his lair cower at his clovenhoofed approach. 'Tis he who rules supremely his domain, by twisted swirls of flame and obedient creatures so wretched, no mortal dareth traverse the Bridge of Death crossing the River of Fire. Beware him. He is darkness, he is the omnipotent demon Lucifer, he is SATAN OF THE HOLLOW.

Bally/MIDWAY
T.M.

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